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WITH THE WITS

SHELBURNE ESSAYS
TENTH SERIES

With the Wits

SHELBURNE ESSAYS
TENTH SERIES

By Paul Elmer More

"There is nothing that provokes and sharpens wit like malice." — SAMUEL BUTLER, *Wit and Folly*.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
Houghton Mifflin Company
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Preface

THE essays in this volume were written some time ago, during the years when I was editor of the *Nation*, and were all published in that journal, with the exception of the one on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. They were occasional in their origin, suggested by the publication of various books, and composed with no design of forming a connected series. The title, therefore, under which they are now gathered together should not mislead the reader into looking for what in the nature of the case he cannot find. There has been no plan to write a history of "wit," no attempt to treat the subject with philosophic unity or erudite completeness. The essays do indeed for the most part deal with the "wits," technically so called, who clustered about the court of Queen Anne and went into opposition on the coming of George the First, and so far the title of the book may be justified; but some of the greater stars of the galaxy are missing, and others are included who had their rising at an earlier or a later date. Of certain of the names I fear the critical reader may even be tempted to exclaim: *Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?* My galley, in fact, is only an excursion boat on the waters of jour-

nalism, the company is mixed; if the brief trip on such a bark and with such comrades prove agreeable, I shall be content.

Should any too curious student recall the memory of these essays as they came out originally in the *Nation*, he will note that some of them are considerably enlarged in their present state, and may surmise that the new material has been prepared specially for this reprinting in book form. As a matter of fact the procedure was quite the contrary: it was my custom to compose with free hand and then to cut down to the length permitted by the exigencies of space. The work of elimination sometimes gave me pain, but since I was acting as both contributor and editor, the pangs of the one were alleviated by the remorseless joy of the other. It was as if I wrote with pen in one hand and blue pencil in the other. The satisfaction, if so it may be called, is one of the few I have to regret since I exchanged the editorial chair for the much easier seat in my library.

These are secrets of the prison house, of little moment to the outside world; if I divulge them, it is not for vanity, but in the hope that some of the enemies I made as editor among over-teeming contributors, hearing that I could be stern to the offspring of my own genius as well as to theirs, may peradventure take me back into their good graces. Alas, if only I could appease other resentments by telling how often the hateful review

(the more hateful, sometimes, because just) was no product of my gall, nor even of a chosen enemy's, but came from some gentle friend of the author, who loved him not the less but truth the more. I remember once suffering a savage attack from an unflattered historian in the parlour of a common friend for a review supposedly by my pen but really the handiwork of our host. The honest reviewer would have diverted the storm to himself, had I not restrained him by a gesture. In another case the wife of a brother editor has pursued me relentlessly these ten years for the review of her husband's book which was written by one of his own favoured contributors — and the review was fair.

Nevertheless, I left the *Nation* convinced that anonymous reviewing is the best. Scholarship and letters are more in danger of suffering from the false praise of log-rolling friends and climbing subordinates when reviews are signed, than from dishonest backbiting when reviews are anonymous. The only irritating source of injustice against which I had to be much on my guard was a kind of professional jealousy. I soon learned that it was virtually impossible to get fair consideration for a book written by a scholar not connected with a university from a reviewer so connected. Invariably the review, if it did not damn outright and outrageously, would begin by saying that for an amateur the work was

commendable, but —. Envy, my friend Plato assures me, has no place in the chorus of celestial beings; I shall tell him, if ever I have the joy of saluting him humbly where he walks in company with Socrates and all the wise, that envy seems to have abundant place in the present halls of Academe.

Such, then, were the conditions under which these essays were written. What appears to be new matter is for the most part only salvage from the blue pencil. Some alterations have been made to meet such criticism as the articles called forth at the time, and in particular I have to thank Professor C. A. Moore for his excellent and courteous correction (printed in the *South Atlantic Quarterly* for July, 1915) of one of the theses maintained in my paper on Berkeley; I hope he will be better content with the essay in its amended form. A few other changes have been made for the sake of consistency, but in the main the essays stand as they were first conceived. If any single theme predominates sufficiently to lend a kind of unity of purpose to the book, it is that expressed in an anecdote related by Boswell:

> Mr. Beauclerk one day repeated to Doctor Johnson, Pope's lines,
>
> "Let modest Foster, if he will, excel
> Ten metropolitans in preaching well."
>
> Then asked the Doctor, "Why did Pope say this?" JOHNSON: "Sir, he hoped it would vex somebody."

It is a simple truth that the writers from whom this volume derives its name were much concerned with vexing somebody; malice is an essential ingredient of what we mean by "wit," and this, the cynical may say, will explain why my mind was so much engaged with this subject while I was editing the *Nation* in its unreformed days. If so, I am still unrepentant; I even think that nothing would be a more wholesome tonic for our modern surfeit of sentimentalism than a little of the saving grace of malice, and that amidst the welter of humanitarian optimism a proper counter-irritant might be found in Swift's "great foundation of misanthropy." I do not mean to uphold the method of Pope and Swift as in itself the highest form of criticism. Boileau, for example, has the keenest satire, and at the same time shows very little malice, such as we find it among the wits of Queen Anne. The satire of Horace is genial rather than malicious. Dr. Johnson, though he lacks the epigrammatic point of other writers, can do fairly well on occasion and is free also of personal spite. This indeed is one reason why the age of Johnson rather than that of Pope is the true Augustan age of England, so far as she had one.

But our own day has its peculiar weakness, and would take no harm from the application of special remedies. We suffer from a murky surfeit of self-flattery and sham philanthropy, and a

little of the opposite excess might help to clear the air. Some balance of sanity might be struck out from these clashing extremes of flattery and detraction applied to human nature; or, at least, if balance is not to be attained in that way, the result would be mightily amusing. There are several people in the world who need to be vexed.

Certainly the literary atmosphere would be wonderfully cleared by the reappearance of a Pope. Imagine what a *Dunciad* the wicked little man might compose to-day; what havoc he would work among those novelists and dramatists who divulge their prurience under the guise of reform and champion licence as the liberty of prophesying. What a flutter he would stir up in the dovecote of our mutually admiring poets, whether imagist, symbolist, anthologist, *vers-libriste*, or however else ticketed. He knew them when he wrote his *Imitation of Horace:*

> In vain, bad rhymers all mankind reject,
> They treat themselves with most profound respect;
> 'T is to small purpose that you hold your tongue,
> Each, praised within, is happy all day long.

Malice is an excellent medicine for self-complaisance in the artist; it is a good purgation also for cant and humbug in high places. Fancy, if you dare, what a flow of satire would emanate from our new Twickenham when some solemn college president had been advocating lower

standards of education under the plea that we must train men for service — that blessed word.

"Service!" he cries; "we train the budding mind
Itself to lose and serve all human kind;
A little learning is a dangerous thing,
Come not to college, or no Latin bring."

But there is higher game than the silk-robed tyrant of academic senates, and education was not, and is not, the only field in which the charlatan makes capital of the seductive phrases of idealism. Suppose a convocation in Pope's day was met to settle the affairs of the world and to establish peace and good will among men; suppose then that Pope should read in a most respectable magazine such comment as this on the secret proceedings of the guiding committee: "The task of the three men is made easier for them by the fact that the world gives them a blank check for expenses. No errors they can make, so far as we can imagine, can conceivably compare with the tragic errors of statesmanship before the war." I suspect that the "paper-saving" poet would have used the back of this blank check for other purposes than endorsement. He might have found it a convenient place for asking, not in blank verse, whether this was a particularly happy time for abjuring reason and common sense and critical control, because some one else had blundered. I seem to remember that the "wits" had bad words for the type of egotist and saviour of

mankind, now become so popular among the signers of blank checks.

> Behold the statesman, of mankind the friend,
> Who claims your vote that wars may have an end;
> Lets loose the passions and unchains the storm,
> While crying still the blessings of reform.
> Peace on his lips and faction in his heart,
> Though Europe totter, he will play his part.
> He bears no brother near him on the throne,
> Who would be saviour of mankind alone.
> Fame little reckons what her minions do;
> Flatter the mob, the mob will flatter you.

P. E. M.

Princeton, N.J.,
1 *May*, 1919

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BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

With the Wits

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

THE Cambridge University Press has brought us no better gift these latter years than the complete works of Beaumont and Fletcher, "those renowned twins of poetry," exactly edited by the care of Arnold Glover and A. R. Waller.[1] No one now would style these volumes, as James Shirley styled the first folio edition, "without flattery, the greatest monument of the scene that time and humanity have produced"; but they contain an inexhaustible body of entertainment, and, as Shirley said to the reader in that "tragical age where the theatre [had] been so much out-acted," so we may say to the reader in these times of gathering trouble: "Congratulate thy own happiness, that, in this silence of the stage, thou hast a liberty to read these inimitable plays, to dwell and converse in these immortal groves, which were only showed our fathers in a conjuring glass, as suddenly removed as represented." Beaumont may have been a sentimentalist and Fletcher may be a shocking example of prostituted genius,

[1] *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher.* Ten volumes. The Cambridge University Press. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1905–12.

but they were of their age, and together they are the typical masters of the mature Elizabethan drama, which, with all its sins of omission and commission, is still the most extraordinary, if not the greatest, achievement of English literature.

The earlier Elizabethan tragedies had as a rule (not invariably) been based on a single master passion, which by its excess led both the persons possessed by it and their victims into acts of blood and madness. Comedy meanwhile had been largely a thing of adventure and amusement, an escape from fact and fatality into a world of happier fancy, until, by introducing the master passion in the form of humours, Jonson changed fancy into satire and set comedy on a parallel with tragedy.

That was a change important alike for literature and philosophy; but about the same time another step, no less notable in its consequences, was taken, or followed, by Beaumont and Fletcher. Hitherto tragedy and comedy, when united in the same play, had, for the most part, stood together as mere alternations from one *genre* to another. A more essential union of the two was prepared when our twin dramatists (if we may give them all the credit) altered the theme of tragedy from a single master passion to a number of loosely coördinated passions, thus relaxing the rigidity of the tragic structure and

permitting the fancy to play more intimately through all the emotions. Such, in a general way, would seem to be the origin of the new form, which lay in germ in some of the earlier plays, but was developed in the first decade of the seventeenth century into the well-marked *genre* of the romantic drama,[1] Its influence, direct and indirect, from that day to this has been incalculable.

The possible beauty of this new form of drama is familiar to us from *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, if not from the work of other writers; it is of a kind, indeed, to appeal with peculiar cogency to ears accustomed to modern romance. But with the faults inherent in the *genre* it is different. Ethically these are so involved in the obscure currents of the age that their real source and gravity are likely to be overlooked, and æsthetically we have become more or less blunted to them by long familiarity. Yet there has been no lack of individual protests against the sudden conversions of character and quick shiftings of motive which are the most striking manifesta-

[1] In his monograph on *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare*, Prof. A. H. Thorndike has brought together a mass of evidence to show that Beaumont and Fletcher were the creators of this *genre* and that Shakespeare was the imitator. The argument is persuasive, if not entirely conclusive. It might have been better in this case to have separated the "twins," and to have sought the origin of the romantic drama in the peculiar genius of Beaumont alone.

tions of a deep-lying corruption. There are still readers and spectators who, however they may be borne along by the magic of Shakespeare's style, are brave enough to admit that they are disconcerted by the inartistic abruptness of such changes in passion as those of Leontes in *The Winter's Tale;* and one critic at least, who followed not long after the efflorescence of the romantic drama, was so bold or, if you will, so insolent, as to enlarge the censure of these faults into virulent abuse of the whole Elizabethan stage.

There is an offensive undertone of buffoonery in old Thomas Rymer's diatribe against *The Tragedies of the Last Age;* his taste was vitiated by an insensibility to things beautiful in themselves and by a hard pseudo-classic canon of decorum, but one is bound to admit that his criticism of *The Maid's Tragedy* (not to say of *Othello*) finds the weak points of the play with diabolical shrewdness. "This may be *Romance,* but not *Nature,*" he exclaims, after setting forth the irrelevance of the motives that Beaumont employs. And he is justified. Consider, for example, the speeches of a single actor in that tangle of lust and love, loyalty and effrontery. We first become acquainted with Evadne in a scene (II, i) characteristic of the age, when her ladies are disrobing her after her marriage to Amintor. Here she displays delicacy of feeling which might befit a

Desdemona; yet immediately afterwards, to repulse her husband, she avows her lust, her engagement to the King, and her acceptance of Amintor merely as "one to father children":

> Alas, Amintor, think'st thou I forbear
> To sleep with thee, because I have put on
> A maiden's strictness? Look upon these cheeks,
> And thou shalt find the hot and rising blood
> Unapt for such a vow. No; in this heart
> There dwells as much desire and as much will
> To put that wish'd act in practice as e'er yet
> Was known to woman; and they have been shown
> Both. But it was the folly of thy youth
> To think this beauty, to what land soe'er
> It shall be called, shall stoop to any second.
> I do enjoy the best, and in that height
> Have sworn to stand or die; you guess the man.

To the King himself (III, i) she admits only her calculating pride, declaring that she loves with her ambition, not with her eyes, and that if he were thrust from his throne she would forsake him for his supplanter. Later, though she had expressed a certain pity for Amintor (II, i), she is heard laughing with the King over the way they have cozened him. In the great scene (IV, i) in which her brother charges her disgrace upon her and demands the death of her paramour, there is perhaps justification for her deep repentance; certainly in the magnificent sweep of the emotions here portrayed the reader is not likely to feel anything false to nature, if such exists, even in her

transition from abject self-abasement to a kind of self-pity:

> Here I swear it,
> And all you spirits of abusèd ladies
> Help me in this performance.

But the same cannot be said of her words to the King when she prepares to murder him in his bed-chamber (v, ii). There is something in her "mere joy" in killing that jars with her previous mood of chastened grief, and when one considers her avowed reasons for deceiving Amintor, one has almost a feeling of revulsion at the tone of her accusation:

> I am as foul as thou art, and can number
> As many such hells here. I once was fair,
> Once I was lovely; not a blowing rose
> More chastely sweet, till thou, thou, thou, foul canker,
> (Stir not) didst poison me.

Chaste and sweet — if the lady and the dramatist have forgotten her first confession to Amintor, the reader certainly has not. Nor can the reader quite stomach her next mood of sudden and overwhelming love for Amintor (iv, i), however deep her aversion to the King may have become.

The simple fact is, here are but a succession of womanly passions, each indeed cunningly conceived and expressed, but giving us in the end nothing we can grasp as a whole and comprehend — no woman at all, unless mere random passion-

ateness can be accounted such. And this sense of incoherence would be magnified if we should analyse Amintor and the other persons of the drama in the same way. To the dramatist in his abuse of passions as the occasion of the plot permits or drives him, we are tempted to apply the words of Rowley in *All 's Lost by Lust:*

> Time's ancient bawd, opportunity,
> Attends us now, and yet our flaming blood
> Will scarce give leave to opportunity.

Evadne is presumably the creation of Beaumont. For the typical work of Fletcher in this *genre* we may turn to *Valentinian.* If there is anything in reputable literature more revolting to the ethical sense (as the Greeks conceived *êthos*) than the conclusion of that play, I cannot now recall it. All through the first four acts we see Maximus and his friend Aecius acting as high-minded Romans. The Emperor Valentinian, a base, libidinous creature, lures the beautiful and chaste wife of Maximus to the court, and there ravishes her. Nothing could be nobler in the old heroic sense than the first scene of the third act, in which the two friends learn of her ruin and part from her as she goes out with the determination to purify her stain by death:

> *Lucina.* Farewell for ever, Sir.
> *Maximus.* That's a sad saying,
> But such a one becomes ye well, Lucina.
> And yet methinks we should not part so lightly;

Our loves have been of longer growth, more rooted,
Than the sharp word of one farewell can scatter..
Kiss me: I find no Cæsar here; these lips
Taste not of ravisher in my opinion.
Was it not so?
Luc. O yes.
Max. I dare believe thee,
For thou wert ever truth itself, and sweetness;
Indeed she was, Aecius. . . .
Aecius. The farewells, then, of happy souls be with thee,
And to thy memory be ever sung
The praises of a just and constant lady.
This sad day whilst I live, a soldier's tears
I 'll offer on thy monument, and bring,
Full of thy noble self with tears untold yet,
Many a worthy wife to weep thy ruin.
Max. All that is chaste upon thy tomb shall flourish,
All living epitaphs be thine, time, story;
And what is left behind to piece our lives
Shall be no more abused with tales and trifles,
But full of thee, stand to eternity.

Shakespeare himself would barely have expressed a pure and steadfast love more finely, and there is nothing in these scenes to mar the effect. The one desire of Maximus now is revenge upon the Emperor. To this end he is obliged to break through his friendship for Aecius; and again the conflict between his affection and his deadly purpose is portrayed in the noblest manner. But what happens then? Aecius is tricked to his ruin, the Emperor is murdered, the saintly martyr is scarcely buried, and then, suddenly and without

warning, we find Maximus (v, iii) a coarse plotter and traitor:

Maximus. Gods, what a sluice of blood have I let open!
My happy ends are come to birth, he's dead,
And I revenged; the empire's all afire,
And desolation everywhere inhabits.
And shall I live that am the author of it? . . .
You that but stept before me, on assurance
I would not leave your friendship unrewarded,
First smile upon the sacrifice I have sent ye,
Then see me coming boldly. — Stay, I am foolish,
Somewhat too sudden to mine own destruction;
This great end of my vengeance may grow greater:
Why may not I be Cæsar? Yet no dying;
Why should not I catch at it? Fools and children
Have had that strength before me, and obtain'd it. . . .
If I rise,
My wife was ravish'd well!

I do not know, considering what has gone before, that there is a viler and more disheartening line than this last in the whole Elizabethan drama. And it gives the keynote of the huddled scenes that follow — the usurpation of the throne and the hideous wooing to that end of the widowed Empress. The only consolation in the thing is that the Empress poisons Maximus for his villany.

I have dwelt at some length on these two plays of Beaumont and Fletcher respectively because they offer examples, though glaring ones indeed, of the sort of moral inconsistency that is characteristic not only of their plays, but of the whole

drama of this later period. It may be possible occasionally, by aid of a desperate casuistry, to reconcile the contradictory passions of these plays, to explain the debasement of Maximus, for instance, as the crudely conceived result of vengeful desires working in a troubled soul; but the dramatist himself gives us no such ease, and one cannot read many of these plays without feeling that the fault lies deeper than any mere crudeness of literary procedure, that it touches, in fact, the very conscience of the writers and of the people who encouraged them. The nature of the fault can be shown by comparing together three different ways in which the passion of love has been treated dramatically.

We have seen that the principal step from the older tragedy to the romantic drama was taken when a number of passions were employed as motives instead of a single dominant passion; but to understand the gravity of that change we must look still further into the past; we must go from *The Maid's Tragedy* or *Valentinian* to such a play as *Romeo and Juliet*, and from that to such a play as the Euripidean *Hippolytus*.

Euripides has built up his plot on a manifestation of love as devastating and as morbid as any dramatist of the Renaissance could have desired; but withal his real theme is not this passion in itself, but the character, or personality, who suffers it. The drama deals with the fatal relation of

two persons, Hippolytus and Phædra, each intrinsically virtuous, but each carried away by excess of passion. Hippolytus has dedicated himself to an austere ideal of chastity. No doubt, the pure abstinence of his life is painted in glowing colours, but the real thought of the dramatist is conveyed in the words of the servants who rebuke Hippolytus for his exclusive devotion to Artemis and for his overweening contempt of mortal nature.[1] In the same way Phædra is condemned and falls into the calamities of crime because she yields her soul to the excess of the opposite passion. So the chorus, when they have heard her unwilling confession of love for her stepson, cry out, "May no unmeasured love come to us!" and Phædra herself, after she has resolved on escape from shame by death, exclaims, "By bitter love I shall be beaten!"

Now, the bloody dénouement of the plot springs indeed from the clashing of these two passions

[1] If I have erred in this judgement of Hippolytus I have erred with antiquity. "Let us vote a crown to him for his temperance," says Apollonius Tyaneus of a tempted and virtuous young Egyptian, "rather than to Hippolytus the son of Theseus; for the latter insulted Aphrodite, and that may be why he never felt the spell of the goddess and why love never made merry in him, but left him to his harsh and unbending fate. . . . The mere aversion to any one of the gods, such as Hippolytus entertained to Aphrodite, I do not class as a form of temperance, for it is a greater mark of wisdom and sobriety to speak well of all the gods." (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, VI, 3.)

of inhuman chastity and morbid love; but the real tragedy of the play, that which stirs our emotions, depends on no such external conflict, but on the moral drama of the two souls who are the prey of these passions. More particularly Phædra, the protagonist, does not appear as a mere personification of a passion, but is by many touches represented as a person existing apart from the passion that assails her. Deep in her bosom lies the *aidôs*, the sense of honour, modesty, reverence, the inner check whose office is to oppose a restraining force upon inroads of excessive or unlawful emotions, and which forms the elemental basis of that mysterious entity called character. To emphasize this distinction between character and passion and to bring out more clearly the field where the real tragic conflict takes place, Euripides has developed the old mythology of his people into a kind of allegory. Artemis and Aphrodite, as we see them here acting, are no longer the enlarged human persons we have known in the earlier poets, but have been transformed into symbols of the irrational, emotional powers that sway the human heart. In Artemis there is something of the superrational, so that submission to her sway is not portrayed as evil in itself, but as a thing perilous to those who in this earthly life would walk by a law which transcends the common measure of mortality. Aphrodite, on the contrary, stands as the em-

bodiment of unrestrained and instinctive desire. The nurse, who represents a pure naturalism, may encourage Phædra to yield to the dæmonic power:

> Cease your violent pride (*hybris*); for it is only such pride that bids you wish to be superior to the *dæmons*. Love boldly; so the god wills.

But the Queen looks higher, and knows that the integrity of her character depends on her will to withstand these dæmonic assaults. "My mind," she says, "has been broken by unholy loves, by a terrible disease from Aphrodite." And at the end Artemis declares that "Cypris, the crime-doer, has contrived these things." In a word, the play of *Hippolytus* is essentially moral, just because the tragic pity and horror are based on this distinction between passion and the inner citadel of character.[1]

If we turn to *Romeo and Juliet*, we shall find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere. Shakespeare, too, has made love the theme of his drama, and he has painted it with a luxuriant beauty and a deep understanding such as, perhaps, no other poet has ever equalled. There is no ill in that; but he has done an ill thing in bringing this fair passion wantonly, or ignorantly, to a tragic end, and has shown thereby that to this extent

[1] *Hippolytus*, I think, stands almost alone in this respect among the plays of Euripides. Most of his tragedies, notably the much-admired *Bacchæ*, show rather the romantic traits of Beaumont and Fletcher.

he stands on a lower moral level than his Greek predecessor. Nothing indicates that he thought of this love between the two young hearts of Verona as criminal by reason of its own excess; rather in its very unreflecting intensity lies the seal of its charm and justification. Nor is there any breath of conflict in the bosoms of these brave lovers; rather they are all one passion, mere instruments to sound the sweetest cadences of innocent love. Why, then, the bloody and horrid conclusion? The quarrel of Capulet and Montague might well have been used to draw out the plot of the play, and by offering resistance to the course of true love might have added a deeper note to its blissful end; but to make this purely external circumstance the cause and source of tragedy is to pass from the realm of moral cause and effect into a region where emotion is accidental and bears no relation to character. A truer ethical sense would have brought the drama to a happy end, or would have drawn its tragic pathos from some conflict of passion with passion within the same breast, or, more profoundly, as Euripides has done in the *Hippolytus*, from the opposition of character and victorious excessive passion.

And *Romeo and Juliet* is typical of the early Elizabethan tragedy. In other plays the passion in itself is unlovely, and so may seem to belong more properly to tragedy than does Shakespeare's theme; but in almost all cases, and indeed with

varying degrees, if the action is examined, it will be found to omit the essentially moral element, and to bring before us a personified passion rather than a character overcome by passion. I have taken one of Shakespeare's plays as an example, and rightly, I think; but it is also true that in his greater tragedies Shakespeare stands quite apart from his age, rising above it by the very strength in him of this moral sense which was so generally weak in his rivals. In *Macbeth* he belongs with Æschylus and Euripides, and the audience which was moved by the passion and woe of Agamemnon would have understood and applauded the evil doom of the Scottish usurper. Though romantic in detail and in complexity of form, and though, it must be admitted, sometimes barbarous in the handling, the greater plays of Shakespeare are in their substance profoundly classic.

In the earlier Elizabethan drama the employment, for the most part, of a single passion as the tragic motive, even where the sense of character was weak or wanting, lent a superficial consistency to the acts and words of the protagonist which gave to him at least the semblance of character. With the romantic drama, in which the action shifts unaccountably from one passion to another, even this illusive consistency is lost, and the play appears no longer as merely non-moral, but too often as simply wanton. The punishment

came heavily and publicly. From the first there had been preachers of the Puritan stamp to denounce the "flexanimous enticements" of the stage, and with the growth of Puritanism and the degeneracy of the drama these denunciations became more violent and more voluminous, reaching their maximum of both in the huge and clamorous *Histriomastix* (1632) of William Prynne.

I doubt if anybody in this generation has been able to read through that leviathan of objurgation, and for imposing such a monster on the world Prynne well deserved to have his ears cropped and to be branded on the cheeks as Seditious Libeller (among other amenities he called Queen Henrietta Maria a "notorious whore"): the punishment did the cause of righteousness no harm, and it wrung from a sour pedant one of the best puns ever made in England, when he interpreted the letters S. L. as *Stigmata Laudis*. In the vigorous language of the *Histriomastix* (p. 41) these plays, which we are criticising so mildly, "had their Alpha, and Omega; their beginning, and end: their birth, *and use from Hell;* being not only invented *by the Devill himselfe:* but likewise by his owne speciall command, and his greatest minions advice" — the devil, if I understand Mr. Prynne, being the Dionysus of the Athenians in whose honour plays were first performed and whose lewdness still presides over the stage. As for the comedies of his age, the Puritanical critic

thought (p. 62) that "the stile, and matter of most popular, (especially Comical,) Stage-Playes, is Amorous, Scurrilous, and Obscene" — and he might have proved his point without a page and a half of references to the Fathers. "The stile, and subject Matter of our Tragedies," he adds (p. 73), "are Bloody, and Tyrannical" — whereupon follows a list of all the passions, beginning with envy and ending with revenge, which formed the substance of the romantic drama. He comes closer to a philosophic criticism when he complains (p. 177) that "men in Theatres, are so farre from sinne-lamenting sorrow, that they even delight themselves with the representations of those wickednesses, which the originall Authors of them now deplore in Hell." After the charitable fashion of his tribe, Prynne saw only the evil and nothing of the good of what displeased him, and his palpable ignorance of the stage, together with his assurance that any page of Latin from one of the Fathers is a better argument than the actual comprehension of what he was writing about, deprives his book and others of its kind of any critical value.

Nevertheless, Prynne does, in the last charge quoted, approach the real evil of the late Elizabethan drama. In saying that the audiences took delight in the representation of wickednesses without sin-lamenting sorrow, he has merely changed into what we may be pleased to call re-

ligious cant, the fundamental literary criticism that these plays deal with the expression and interaction of passions in themselves with little sense of character. For it must be observed that moral judgement and literary criticism here go hand in hand. There is no doubt much to condemn in Beaumont and Fletcher from the direct standpoint of public decency; but, on the other hand, they are full also of moral sentiments magnificently expressed. The real moral indictment under which they lie is rather the more central charge that in ignoring that element of our being which stands apart from the passions as a governing power, they loosed the bond of character, removing from conduct the law of cause and effect and leaving human nature as a mere bundle of unrelated instincts.

That is the moral judgement, and the æsthetic criticism is but the same thing in different words. There is much in these plays that offends any canon of taste, but, again, they are replete with passages and whole scenes of exquisite beauty and superlative wit; if any balance of this kind be drawn, they must be rated very high as literary productions. The real criticism comes when we begin to reflect, and, reflecting, feel the want of that profounder pleasure of the imagination which springs from the intimate marriage of the emotions and the understanding. We understand a thing as we see a principle of unity at work

within or behind a changing group of appearances. We understand human nature in the same way: we may in a manner respond in feeling to emotions, we understand only character. We respond deeply to the emotions of the *Hippolytus*, and at the same time we understand the background, so to speak, of character upon which they are thrown, and from this union of feeling and understanding springs the highest æsthetic delight. We feel as keenly the long emotional beauty of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the impression of that pleasure remains clearly and firmly implanted in memory, though the deeper joy of the imagination has been lost from the play with the disappearance of character. Our heart is still touched by the exquisite painting of the emotions in *The Maid's Tragedy*, but it must be admitted also that its incomprehensible tangle of the passions weakens to a certain extent the sympathetic echo of each within us, and in the end leaves an indistinct and blurred impression in memory. So clearly do intellectual comprehension and moral judgement flow together, and so at the last do the censures of the Puritan theologian, Prynne, and the Restoration critic, Rymer, though each is unjust and even foolish in its excess, clasp hands in a curious way and justify each other. But from the standard of the latter, perhaps, rather than of the former, we shall be able to arrive more directly at the source of what from

either point of view must be regarded as a degeneracy of the stage.

The reason of this degeneracy has been variously given. To P. Aronstein, who has discussed the ethical aspects of Beaumont and Fletcher at considerable length (*Anglia*, vol. XXXI, 1908), it seems to lie in the narrowing of the drama from a national interest to the flattery of a courtly caste. Such a change no doubt had its effect, and as an offset to the diatribes of the earlier dramatists against the vulgarizing influence of the clamorous popular breath, it is well to remember such a passage as that of *Sejanus* (III, iii), in which Jonson states the corrupting atmosphere of the court:

> He that will thrive in state, he must neglect
> The trodden paths that truth and right respect;
> And prove new, wilder ways: for virtue there
> Is not that narrow thing she is elsewhere.

Something of wanton perversion in the Jacobean plays is no doubt due to the courtier's appetite for new and wilder ways, but such an explanation cannot be pressed too far; after all, it leaves out of account the fact that the seeds of corruption were already planted in the Elizabethan drama when most national in appeal, and it forgets the subtler causes which connect our English literature with the wider movement of the Renaissance.

If we are unable in the proper sense of the word to comprehend many of the persons that speak upon the stage of Beaumont and Fletcher, the same thing is true of the more typical men and women who were playing the actual drama of the age. I defy any one to say that he really understands that strange combination of passions which we call Henry VIII. I do not find that any historian, however patiently he may have studied the documents, has been able to make Mary Stuart stand before us as a comprehensible woman: analyse as we will, we cannot say that this act of hers was virtuous and this criminal, or that this act was expressive of her real nature and this act was forced from her by circumstances; for the reason that we cannot connect her acts with any central spring of conduct. We should not still be so uncertain of her part in the death of Darnley, if that event, whatever her responsibility or lack of responsibility, had left any definable impression upon any discoverable substance of character. And in like manner, if to a less degree, Mary's son, James I, indeed his whole court, with its Bacon, its Buckingham, its Lady Essex, has never been made comprehensible, and I doubt if it can ever be made to appear anything but a bewildering medley of passions.

There is no need of multiplying examples to show that England in this respect was merely representative of the age. It is futile to say that

we can really comprehend Machiavelli's attempt to create a logical consistency of the passions with the element of morality, that is, of character, entirely omitted. We may be fascinated by that scamp artist, Benvenuto Cellini, but who will dare say that he stands forth clearly as a man, subject to censure or praise? Even more significant is a comparison of two supreme artists, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Take the statue of *Night* in the Medici monument, and consider its effect by the side of such a picture as the *John the Baptist* which Leonardo painted (in part at least) in his old age. However the image of *Night* may in a fashion overwhelm us with its superhuman majesty, it conveys to us a definite meaning which we can express in words, which, indeed, the sculptor himself has expressed in the quatrain written in reply to one who said the stone needed only to be roused from sleep to speak:

> Grateful to me is sleep, and more, alas,
> To be of stone while shame and fortune reign;
> To see not, nothing feel, I count for gain;
> Therefore awake me not, speak low, and pass.

On the contrary, the very fascination of the *John the Baptist* is its sly elusiveness: neither masculine nor feminine, neither content nor discontent with life, it stands smiling with the smile of the senses which have no relation to any definable cause and leave no effect in the heart, pointing

skyward with its finger into no paradise of the soul, but into a world of pure music wherein the emotions live *in vacuo*. And as the statue and the picture, so in some measure were the men themselves. Michelangelo, notwithstanding his genius, is a personality into whose life we can in a way enter; we know the causes of his profound discontent with the age in which he strove; we can connect his words with a central substance of character. But the more we read of Leonardo, and the more we contemplate his works, the less we really understand him. In the Milanese court of Ludovico Sforza he moves amidst degradation and cruelty that would horrify into silence any right-minded man of to-day; yet he moves, troubled, no doubt, æsthetically by the ugliness of sin, but morally undismayed, a servant of that bestial life and at the same time evoking the pure and transcendent beauty of *The Last Supper*.

Now, in this divergence between the two great artists of Italy, Leonardo represents the pure spirit of the Renaissance, the same spirit which, lacking the Italian's feeling for refined, self-sufficient beauty, was at work in the English drama. And if we seek for the cause of this new appearance, we must find it, I think, after due reservations are made for the insoluble complexities of history, in the failure of the Catholic Church to supply a central law of character in place of its decaying discipline. The tendency of the Church

through the Middle Ages had been, on the whole, to discredit reliance on a man's own inner control and to substitute in its place a rule of outer conformity. What other meaning can be given to the emphasis on belief in the Church as the source and revealer of truth and to the belittling of individual responsibility for discovering the truth in its secret hiding-place in the man's own soul? What else is the meaning of regeneration by baptism, of absolution through confession, and of spiritual edification by the eucharist? Greek philosophy, as we see it in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, represents the human soul as standing naked and unassisted in the midst of great, buffeting, dæmonic powers, fighting for possession of itself, and happy or miserable in accordance with its ability to choose and control from among the infinite solicitations of the other world. On the contrary, the Middle Ages were to teach man that the conflict had once for all been fought and won and settled, and that henceforth salvation was to be obtained by accepting that decision and surrendering to the victor. I do not say that this was all of the Catholic religion: it had its great mystics who escaped through its meshes without rending them; its discipline made on the whole for right conduct, and, above all, nourished the imagination with infinite treasures of beauty and fed the emotions with celestial raptures. And doubtless there are other virtues to be reckoned

to its account. Yet after all is said, it remains true that when ecclesiastical authority was broken by knowledge and scepticism, the soul was left with all its riches of imagination and emotion, but with the principle of individual responsibility discredited and the fibre of self-government relaxed. The consequences may be seen in the Italy of the sixteenth century.

The age of the Renaissance was enormously complex. On the one hand, there were many forces at work to nourish the arts; the very release from discipline for a little while acted as a powerful stimulus on the sensuous faculties, and the disintegrating effects of that release were stayed in Italy by the recovery of a marvellous æsthetic tradition. Elsewhere the Reformation was active in restoring, blindly and confusedly no doubt, the very sense of ethical responsibility which the Renaissance largely ignored. In a way, Michelangelo was quite as much the child of the former as of the latter; and so in France the great leaven of Jansenism produced a Pascal and a Racine. But nowhere was the complication of the currents more intricate than in England. In religion the contest soon passed from the opposition of Catholicism and the Reformation to the opposition of Anglican compromise and the extreme individualism of the Puritans. But in the drama, with which we are now concerned, the course was different. The theatre, for various reasons,

remained almost purely under the influence of the Renaissance, while the Puritans attacked it with every weapon in their arsenal, and the Anglican Church abandoned it to its fate. Nor was there in England any æsthetic tradition to lend to the stage such unity of beautiful design or self-consistent emotion as took the place of moral unity in the work of a Leonardo. The result is that drama of the court which, besides its frequent actual indecency, is at heart so often non-moral and in the higher artistic sense incomprehensible.

Puritanism was not lovely; its attack on the stage was both brutal and indiscriminating; in every direction its spirit of excess wrought evils from which the English world is still suffering more profoundly than most of us are ready to admit. But it performed one great service for letters in bringing into relief the conception of character, and thus rendering literature again both moral and comprehensible. Possibly the Anglican Church and the temper of mind which produced that Church might have been sufficient in themselves to effect this restoration, and certainly the excesses of Puritanism often defeated its own aim; nevertheless, when we pass from Beaumont and Fletcher to Milton, and even to Bunyan, we are bound to acknowledge that something new and of inestimable value to art has come to the surface. We understand the hero of *The Pilgrim's*

Progress as we can in no wise grasp the persons of *The Maid's Tragedy*, and for the very reason that the former has character, whereas the persons of the play have not. And when to this ethical quality, which satisfies the demands of the intelligence, there is added the immediate sense of beauty in itself which Milton enjoyed as a child of the Renaissance, we derive from art that high and full rapture which is the best thing this world affords us, a prize beyond the computation of those who content themselves with feeling without understanding. Moreover, from Bunyan's and Milton's day almost to ours this feeling for character has been the prime possession of English literature, which makes it, despite deficiencies of external form and frequent poverty of thought, the equal of French literature, if not the superior: and this possession was the undeniable gift of the Puritan conscience.

I remember some years ago reading an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* wherein there was an attempt to show that this element of Puritanism in English letters was provincial and straitening in comparison with the moral freedom of modern Paris. The author of the essay I have forgotten, and indeed neither author nor article is of any importance, except as they expressed frankly a sentiment which is beginning to be rather widely accepted, and even preached, by English and American writers who feel a certain pov-

erty in our present-day literature. As a matter of fact, the shoe is quite on the other foot: historically Puritan ethics, whatever its excess, is in the great tradition, whereas Parisian non-morality, like that of Beaumont and Fletcher, is the relic of a special age and movement. It may sound paradoxical at first, but it is true nevertheless, that Bunyan, with all his exasperating qualities, was nearer to the tradition of Greek tragedy than were the dramatists of James's court. The very allegory of *The Holy War*, for instance, is not so far removed as one might suppose from the mythology of the *Hippolytus*. Bunyan, no doubt, is led by his Puritanism to a sharp division between the powers of good and of evil which falsifies human nature in a way that the more wholesome Greek doctrine of the mean avoided; there is something strained and crabbed in his philosophy which may seem to have carried us across the world from the wisdom of Apollo, but at heart his portrayal of the human soul as a city besieged by devils springs from the same perception of the dualism of character and passion as that which guided Euripides in his treatment of Phædra and Aphrodite.

I have been dealing, let me admit, with only one aspect of the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, and in thus isolating the problem I desired to solve I may seem to have exaggerated its importance. To give a just criticism of this great mass

of plays, to attain a complete notion even of their moral qualities, many exceptions would have to be made and many other things accounted for. It would be necessary, for example, to give due weight to such a character as Evanthe in *A Wife for a Month*, who, from every point of view, ethical and artistic, is one of the most finely drawn and truest women in the whole range of English drama. Above all, it would be necessary to set forth the inexhaustible treasures of entertainment offered by these plays. They were to the Elizabethan age what the novel is to ours, and I wonder how many readers three centuries from now will go back to our fiction for amusement as we to-day can go back to Beaumont and Fletcher.

More particularly, Fletcher seems to me a writer of magnificent fecundity, a genius who might have been capable under wiser direction of almost any achievement. Though, as his work stands, he may appear utterly devoid of conscience, a man to whom our human destinies were mere toys, he was by nature of a sounder fibre, I think, than Beaumont, and in readiness of invention and veracity of expression he far surpassed his other collaborators. His writing was the unforced overflow of an abundant talent, and if we may believe the author of the Prologue to *The Chances*, one of his posthumous plays, he was in his person the very embodiment of the wit of the age:

Being in himself a perfect comedy:
And some sit here, I doubt not, dare aver,
Living he made that house a theatre
Which he pleased to frequent.

At his best he has a strain almost like that of Shakespeare, upon whom he manifestly modelled himself in everything except Shakespeare's serious insight into human motives. I was struck by this quality particularly while reading *The Humorous Lieutenant*. That may be rated among his average tragi-comedies. It contains one of those sudden conversions which make us wonder whether in his heart he felt any difference between a satyr-like lust and a chaste love — the conversion of a lecherous old king who tries in every way, even to a love-philtre, to seduce Celia, his son's mistress, and then, without warning, suddenly becomes the admirer and protector of her virtue. But apart from that, and perhaps a slight wavering in the outlines of Celia's character towards the end, the play is a delightful romance in dramatic form, stirring with war and the hot braveries of the court, love and lust, the honour of soldiers and strange mocking humours. And one scene (I, ii), the parting of Celia and the prince when he goes off to the army, might almost have come out of *As You Like It*. It is not too long to quote:

(*Enter Demetrius and Celia.*)

Cel. Must ye needs go?
Dem. Or stay with all dishonour.
Cel. Are there not men enough to fight?
Dem. Fie, Celia.
This ill becomes the noble love you bear me;
Would you have your love a coward?
Cel. No; believe, Sir,
I would have him fight, but not so far off from me.
Dem. Wouldst have it thus? or thus?
Cel. If that be fighting —
Dem. Ye wanton fool: when I come home again
I'll fight with thee, at thine own weapon, Celia,
And conquer thee, too.
Cel. That you have done already,
You need no other arms to me but these, Sir.
But will you fight yourself, Sir?
Dem. Thus deep in blood, wench,
And through the thickest ranks of pikes.
Cel. Spur bravely
Your fiery courser, beat the troops before ye,
And cram the mouth of death with executions.
Dem. I would do more than these. But prithee tell me,
Tell me, my fair, where got'st thou this male spirit?
I wonder at thy mind.
Cel. Were I a man, then
You would wonder more.
Dem. Sure thou wouldst prove a soldier,
And some great leader.
Cel. Sure I should do somewhat;
And the first thing I did, I should grow envious,
Extremely envious of your youth and honour.
Dem. And fight against me?
Cel. Ten to one, I should do it.

Dem. Thou wouldst not hurt me?
Cel. In this mind I am in
I think I should be hardly brought to strike ye,
Unless 't were thus; but in my man's mind —
Dem. What?
Cel. I should be friends with you, too,
Now I think better.
Dem. Ye are a tall soldier. Here, take these, and these;
This gold to furnish ye, and keep this bracelet —
Why do you weep now? You, a masculine spirit?
Cel. No, I confess I am a fool, a woman;
And ever when I part with you —
Dem. You shall not;
These tears are like prodigious signs, my sweet one,
I shall come back, loaden with fame, to honour thee.
Cel. I hope you shall. But then, my dear Demetrius,
When you stand conqueror, and at your mercy
All people bow, and all things wait your sentence;
Say then your eye (surveying all your conquest)
Finds out a beauty, even in sorrow excellent,
A constant face, that in the midst of ruin
With a forced smile both scorns at fate and fortune —
Say you find such a one, so nobly fortified,
And in her figure all the sweets of nature?
Dem. Prithee, no more of this; I cannot find her.
Cel. That shows as far beyond my wither'd beauty;
And will run mad to love ye, too?
Dem. Do you fear me?
And do you think, besides this face, this beauty,
This heart, where all my hopes are lock'd —
Cel. I dare not:
No, sure I think ye honest, wondrous honest.
Pray do not frown, I'll swear ye are.
Dem. Ye may choose.
Cel. But how long will ye be away?
Dem. I know not.

Cel. I know you are angry now: pray look upon me:
I'll ask no more such questions.
Dem. The drums beat,
I can no longer stay.
Cel. They do but call yet:
How fain you would leave my company!
Dem. I would not,
Unless a greater power than love commanded,
Commands my life, mine honour.
Cel. But a little.
Dem. Prithee farewell, and be not doubtful of me.
Cel. I would not have ye hurt; and ye are so venturous —
But good, sweet Prince, preserve yourself, fight nobly,
But do not thrust this body — 't is not yours now,
'T is mine, 't is only mine: do not seek wounds, Sir,
For every drop of blood you bleed —
Dem. I will, Celia,
I will be careful.
Cel. My heart, that loves ye dearly —
Dem. Prithee no more, we must part:
Hark, they march now. [*Drums, a march.*
Cel. Pox on these bawling drums: I am sure you'll kiss me.
But one kiss? What a parting's this!
Dem. Here, take me,
And do what thou wilt with me, smother me;
But still remember, if your fooling with me
Make me forget the trust —
Cel. I have done: farewell, Sir;
Never look back; you shall not stay, not a minute.
Dem. I must have one farewell more.
Cel. No, the drums beat;
I dare not slack your honour; not a hand more,
Only this look; the gods preserve and save ye.

All these excellences must be counted up when we estimate the full value of the work which passes under the names of Beaumont and Fletcher and is an epitome of the later (so-called) Elizabethan drama. But if we are to criticise honestly, and are to avoid blurring the fine distinctions in artistic enjoyment, we should not forget to weigh against such riches of entertainment the deep-lying fault which prevents this drama from taking a place beside the more fully-satisfying productions of art. And, in a longer view, we should remember that, as the wit of our twin dramatists passed by a slight change into that of the Restoration, so their use of the passions and emotions is one of the important sources of the romantic vein in later English literature.

A TEST FOR FLETCHER'S WORK

While reading the new edition of Beaumont and Fletcher in the Cambridge English Classics, I was struck by the frequent employment of *ye* for *you* in *The Loyal Subject*, which is one of the plays attributed to Fletcher alone, and it occurred to me that this usage might afford a supplementary aid to distinguish his work from that of his various collaborators. The test, so far as I have carried it out, has justified this expectation. Fletcher uses *ye* for both numbers and cases, and in both serious and comic scenes, with great frequency, and is distinguished by this mannerism from, at least, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Jonson, Massinger, Middleton, Field, and W. Rowley.

A good illustration of the value of the test in confirming the accepted attribution of parts in a collaborated play is offered by *The False One*. Of this tragedy, Professor G. C. Macaulay (*Cambridge English Literature* vol. VI, chap. V, appendix) ascribes acts I and V to Massinger, acts II, III, and IV to Fletcher. A count of the *you's* and *ye's* results as follows: Act I, 55 *you's*, 0 *ye's;* act V, 30 *you's*, 1 *ye;* act II, 61 *you's*, 31 *ye's;* act III, 34 *you's*, 36 *ye's;* act IV, 47 *you's*, 45 *ye's*. The number of *ye's* here, in acts II, III, and IV, is characteristic of Fletcher, although the ratio often falls considerably lower. The other plays I have tested are as follows:

Wit at Several Weapons. This is ascribed in the "Epilogue at the reviving of this Play" to Fletcher in part, and it was included in the first and second folios of Beaumont and Fletcher. It is ascribed by Macaulay probably to Middleton and Rowley, and this ascription is confirmed by the *ye* test, in so far, at least, as there are no signs anywhere of Fletcher.

The Maid in the Mill. According to Macaulay, acts I;

III, ii and iii; V, ii (a), were written by Fletcher, the rest of the play by some one else, probably Rowley. The test distinguishes Fletcher's work clearly. Thus, III, i (to "Enter Lisauro"), has 16 *you's*, 0 *ye's;* the rest of the scene (apparently Macaulay's "scene ii") has 25 *you's*, 19 *ye's;* III, ii (apparently Macaulay's "scene iii"; there are only two scenes as printed in the folios), has 55 *you's*, 59 *ye's;* V, ii (to "Enter Antonio"), has 38 *you's*, 34 *ye's;* the rest of the scene has 73 *you's*, 0 *ye's*.

Valentinian is by common ascription and by the *ye* test all Fletcher's.

Bonduca. This is attributed by Macaulay to Fletcher and Field, but by the *ye* test would belong entirely to Fletcher.

The Bloody Brother. According to Macaulay acts I and V, i, belong to Massinger; II, iii, and III, i (part), ii, and V, ii, to Fletcher; II, i, ii, and IV, i, ii, to Jonson; III, i (part), and IV, iii, to Field. By the *ye* test there is no sign anywhere of Fletcher. Possibly the whole text was revised by Massinger or another.

The Honest Man's Fortune. Macaulay divides, "apparently," as follows: Tourneur, I; Massinger, III, i; Field, IV; Fletcher, V; the rest doubtful. According to the *ye* test, act V is Fletcher's; acts III and IV show no sign of his work; acts I and II have a few *ye's*, but a lower ratio than is characteristic of Fletcher.

The Two Noble Kinsmen. The title-page of the quarto (1634) gives this play to Fletcher and Shakespeare, and it is included in the second folio of Beaumont and Fletcher. Critics are now pretty generally agreed that Fletcher wrote part of the play, but the name of his collaborator is still in dispute. I may say for myself that I cannot conceive the style of the non-Fletcherian scenes to belong to the mature Shakespeare; the pregnant, allusive, crowded language points, in my judgement, more strongly to Chapman than to any other

writer of the day. While going through this play I marked the words which seemed to me more or less uncommon. On counting them up I found the number to be thirty-six, and all of them, with the exception of "greise," evidently a misprint, fell in the non-Fletcherian parts. This eccentricity of diction again points to Chapman, although I have not looked for these particular words in his acknowledged plays. But this by the way. Macaulay ascribes to Fletcher acts II, iii, iv, v; III, iii, iv, v, vi; IV, i, ii; V, ii, and parts of other scenes. The *ye* test, on the whole, confirms this division, but with the following exceptions: II, iv, has neither *you* nor *ye*, but it consists of only a single speech; II, v, is non-Fletcherian; III, iii, is non-Fletcherian; IV, ii, has no *ye's*, but is short; V, i (the first 19 lines), would belong to Fletcher.

Henry VIII. According to the *ye* test, the following parts belong to Fletcher: I, iv; II, iii; III, i, ii (from "Exit King"); IV, i, ii; V, iii, iv, v. Short and indeterminate scenes are I, iii, and V, ii.

The test when applied to the mixed work of Beaumont and Fletcher gives curious results. *Four Plays* which is, as the name indicates, made up of four independent pieces, shows a small percentage of *ye's* in the first and second Triumphs, and a high percentage in the third and fourth. This falls in with the common opinion which attributes the first two Triumphs to Beaumont and the latter two to Fletcher. But in the plays which are units, such as *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Philaster*, *A King and No King*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and *The Coxcomb*, the mark of Fletcher does not occur at all. It should seem that the writing here, at least in its final form, was almost entirely Beaumont's.

So far only I have carried the investigation; nor, I confess, have I gone through the literature of the subject to see whether any curious reader has forestalled me in the suggestion. Possibly some one else, who has

more time and inclination for this kind of work than I have, may push the test further, and may be able to draw nicer inferences as to the way in which Fletcher collaborated with the various dramatists of the age. One larger conclusion, at least, seems clear: the text of these plays must be pretty close to the form in which it was actually written down by the author; for if there were much revision by copyist or printer, this minute distinction of style would not have been preserved. The frequency of the *ye's* does not seem to depend on the printer of the first or second folio of Beaumont and Fletcher, or of any of the separate editions, and it remains virtually unchanged for each play.

HALIFAX

HALIFAX

THERE is no material in the Oxford edition of Halifax[1] which was not already accessible in Miss Foxcroft's well-known life of the Marquis, but his writings in this separate and beautifully printed book have produced on me, and I suspect will produce on others, quite a different effect from that which came from reading them when relegated to a kind of appendix at the end of two bulky volumes of history. "We are much beholden," says Bacon, "to Machiavel and others that wrote what men do, and not what they ought to do"; and to that small group of writers in English who kept their eyes steadily on the reality of things, George Savile must be added. He has not the gravity and imaginative sweep of Bacon in the philosophical treatises, nor the subtle insinuation into human nature displayed in such an essay as that *Of Marriage and Single Life;* he has not the dogmatic energy of Hobbes, nor the mordant elegance of Chesterfield; but in the sum of his views he is truer and profounder than any one of them. He would scarcely have held it an honour to be regarded primarily as an author,

[1] *The Complete Works of George Savile, First Marquess of Halifax.* Edited with an Introduction by Walter Raleigh. New York: Henry Frowde. 1912.

and he has no place among the great artists and critics of letters; but, when all is considered, I doubt if there is in our tongue a wiser book than this which contains the experience of the statesman of the Revolution. It is a just observation of Professor Raleigh in his admirable introduction: "English literature is very rich; only a very rich literature could have afforded to neglect so distinguished a writer. But it is not rich in practical wisdom; and the neglect of Halifax is a thing to be regretted and amended."

The only writing of Halifax that obtained wide popularity was *The Advice to a Daughter*, which was composed as a New Year's gift for his daughter Elizabeth, afterwards wife of the third Earl of Chesterfield, and mother of one who was to become famous, or infamous, for his letters of advice to a son. A copy of Savile's little *étrenne* was obtained surreptitiously from a scrivener, and, published first without the author's name in 1687–88, ran through many editions down to the end of the eighteenth century. The counsel is not without a tinge of melancholy submission to the facts of life as the Marquis saw them; its manner may seem a bit demoded to-day, and its rules of conduct for wife and mother and lady would probably be indignantly scouted by any woman of our present world who should chance upon its pages. Yet I gravely suspect that it speaks the shrewd truth, and that a young wo-

man who looks for substantial happiness may still profit by the clear and unflinching counsel of this anxious father. And if the tone of the writer is for the most part cold and judicious, it is not because he wrote without feeling. Indeed the opening words of the treatise fairly palpitate with the tender concern of one who has seen the great world and learned its perils and chances:

> I find that even our most pleasing thoughts will be unquiet; they will be in motion; and the mind can have no rest whilst it is possessed by a darling passion. You are at present the chief object of my care as well as of my kindness, which sometimes throweth me into visions of your being happy in the world that are better suited to my partial wishes than to my reasonable hopes for you. At other times, when my fears prevail, I shrink as if I was struck, at the prospect of danger to which a young woman must be exposed. . . .
>
> After such a gentle discipline as you have been under, everything you dislike will seem the harsher to you. The tenderness we have had for you, my dear, is of another nature, peculiar to kind parents, and differing from that which you will meet with first in any family into which you shall be transplanted.

More important in some ways is the *Character of King Charles II.* That monarch, Halifax says, "was so good at finding out other men's weak sides that it made him less intent to cure his own: that generally happeneth. It may be called a treacherous talent, for it betrayeth a man to forget to judge himself, by being so eager to censure

others. This doth so misguide men the first part of their lives, that the habit of it is not easily recovered, when the greater ripeness of their judgement inclineth them to look more into themselves than into other men." Certainly our analyst shows no such treachery of talent; one might say, on the contrary, that his lucid leniency towards that erring master proved that he had looked well into his own heart before undertaking to judge one whose opportunities so often took the form of temptations. In this sketch more than anywhere else in his works he displays his kinship with Montaigne, whose *Essays* he calls, in a letter to Charles Cotton, the translator, "the book in the world I am the best entertained with."

And from this sketch we may conjecture the great loss to literature from his failure to take himself seriously as author. Had he deigned in his later years to compose an account of the reigns of Charles II and James II, we should have had such a work as is absolutely without equivalent in the English language. It would have been something very different from the clever but coarsely conceived history of the pragmatical Bishop Burnet, of whom, it is said, the Marquis in private always spoke "with the utmost contempt, as a factious, turbulent, busy man."

It is no more than fair in this place to set down the Bishop's opinion of the Marquis, not only

as the judgement of one who never hesitated upon one whose statesmanship was a kind of systematized hesitation, but also as one of the few references to Halifax in the literature of the day. On recording the Marquis's death, Burnet dismisses his enemy with a good clerical wish: "And so, I hope, he died a better man than he lived." Earlier in the History he had given this mordant portrait, which betrays both men at once:

He was a man of a great and ready wit, full of life and very pleasant, much turned to satire. He let his wit run much on matters of religion, so that he passed for a bold and determined atheist, though he often protested to me he was not one, and said he believed there was not one in the world. He confessed he could not swallow down every thing that divines imposed on the world; he was a Christian in submission; he believed as much as he could. [He was, it may be interpolated here, a staunch but liberal Church of England man, and has spoken of the divine purpose of religion in no uncertain terms. But he could be caustic too, as in these *Thoughts:* "If the clergy did not live like temporal men, all the power of princes could not bring them under the temporal jurisdiction"; and "Most men's anger about religion is as if two men should quarrel for a lady they neither of them care for."] . . . . He was always talking of morality and friendship. He was punctual in all payments and just in all his private dealings. But with relation to the public he went backwards and forwards and changed sides so often that in conclusion no side trusted him. He seemed full of commonwealth notions, yet he went into the worst part of King Charles's reign. The liveliness of his imagination was always too hard for his judgement. A

severe jest was preferred by him to all arguments whatsoever. [It will be remembered that precisely the same charge, and with much better right, was laid against his grandson, the Earl of Chesterfield.] And he was endless in consultations: for when after much discourse a point was settled, if he could find a new jest, to make even that which was suggested by himself seem ridiculous, he could not hold, but would study to raise the credit of his wit, though it made others call his judgement in question. [The Bishop does not tell us, what we know from the Marquis's son, that he was himself the choice object of this deplorable wit.] When he talked to me as a philosopher of his contempt of the world, I asked him what he meant by getting so many new titles, which I called the hanging himself about with bells and tinsel. He had no other excuse for it but this, that, since the world were such fools as to value those matters, a man must be a fool for company. He considered them but as rattles; yet rattles please children; so these might be of use to his family.

The picture as a whole is clever and specious, but misleading. Halifax was vivacious indeed, but certainly there was no lack of judgement in a man (to confine ourselves for the moment to his literary work) who could write so clearly of the place and needs of the navy as he has done in his *Rough Draft of a New Model at Sea*, or who could give such prudent and persuasive advice to the Nonconformists, in those days of their trial by flattery, as he offered in *The Anatomy of an Equivalent* and *A Letter to a Dissenter*. He would sacrifice himself and everything else to raise the credit of his wit, says the Bishop. Doubtless he

entertained the unpardonable notion that Convocations and Parliaments have no such tremendous weight in the economy of the universe as prelates and legislators are wont to assume, and this may have led him on occasion into ill-considered levity. But it must be remembered that in Charles II England had a master who responded more readily to an equivoke than to a sermon, and that there are times when the passion of party runs so high as to leave no argument to the moderate man save a "severe jest." There is a sense in which it is true that "in conclusion no side trusted him"; not, however, because "he went backwards and forwards and changed sides so often," but because he never surrendered his judgement to either side. Nevertheless, if he belonged to that rare class of men who think it better to be right than to be efficient, it would be an error to suppose that in the longer view his life was a failure or his policy unpractical. Macaulay, who by temperament had no great love for the non-partisan, was yet clear-eyed enough to be just when he came to sum up the career of Halifax:

> What distinguishes him from all other English statesmen is this, that, through a long public life, and through frequent and violent revolutions of public feeling, he almost invariably took that view of the great questions of his time which history has finally adopted. He was called inconstant, because the relative position in which he

stood to the contending factions was perpetually varying. As well might the pole-star be called inconstant because it is sometimes to the east and sometimes to the west of the pointers. To have defended the ancient and legal Constitution of the realm against a seditious populace at one conjuncture and against a tyrannical Government at another; to have been the foremost defender of order in the turbulent Parliament of 1680, and the foremost defender of liberty in the servile Parliament of 1685; to have been just and merciful to Roman Catholics in the days of the Popish Plot and to Exclusionists in the days of the Rye House Plot; to have done all in his power to save both the head of Stafford and the head of Russell; this was a course which contemporaries, heated by passion and deluded by names and badges, might not unnaturally call fickle, but which deserves a very different name from the late justice of posterity.

The place of Halifax is with those moderates who in the noise of tumultuous times often seem to be jostled about as weaklings, yet in the end, somehow, when sanity returns, appear to have had the stars and the forces of nature with them. When Falkland lost his life at Newbury — deliberately threw his life away, said some, in black despair — it may have looked as if his temporizing course between King and Parliament had been as futile as it was perilous. Yet after Charles and Cromwell had played their parts, it was at the last the policy of Falkland and his kind which became the government of the nation, and, on the monument raised where he fell in battle, we now read with commendation the inscription

taken from Burke: "The rest is vanity, the rest is crime." And so, when Halifax died in retirement, it may have seemed, despite the titles and decorations which were mocked by the Bishop of Salisbury, that his powers had been spent in a career of vain protest against the forces of the age; yet in the longer event England of the eighteenth century can be seen to have owed its strength mainly to the balancing policy of him and the few men with him who resisted the current of the day. Without the health and vigour due to their temperance it is scarcely conceivable that Walpole should have so nourished the resources of the land, or Chatham so extended its empire, or Burke formulated the philosophy of its Constitution.

As a matter of fact, Burke himself, though a writer of far wider sweep and more gorgeous eloquence, never wrote a sounder exposition of that philosophy than Halifax had already given in the tract which, anonymously and half-disdainfully, he made public in defence of *The Character of a Trimmer*. On December 3 and 4, 1684, Roger l'Estrange, in two issues of the *Observator*, had uttered a savage attack on the Trimmer as a man who was neither Whig nor Tory, but "a hundred thousand things" as circumstances and lack of conscience moved him; and Miss Foxcroft conjectures, very plausibly, that this was the occasion of Halifax's apology. "This innocent word

Trimmer," he replies, in behalf of himself and his policies, "signifieth no more than this, that if men are together in a boat, and one part of the company would weigh it down on one side, another would make it lean as much to the contrary; it happeneth there is a third opinion of those who conceive it would do as well if the boat went even, without endangering the passengers." This third opinion of those who would trim ship took the form in Halifax's days of an attempt to find a *via media* between the extreme monarchical theories on the one side of Hobbes and Filmer and the non-resistance men, and on the other side the views of those who would deprive monarchy of real authority by the Exclusion Act and other Parliamentary encroachments, or would set up an actual commonwealth.

We think [says Halifax] that a wise mean between these barbarous extremes is that which self-preservation ought to dictate to our wishes; and we may say we have attained to this mean in a greater measure than any nation now in being or perhaps any we have read of, though never so much celebrated for the wisdom or felicity of their Constitutions. We take from one the too great power of doing hurt, and yet leave enough to govern and protect us; we take from the other the confusion, the parity, the animosities, the license, and yet reserve a due care of such a liberty as may consist with men's allegiance. But it being hard, if not impossible, to be exactly even, our Government hath much the stronger bias towards monarchy, which by the general consent and practice of mankind seemeth to have the

advantage in dispute against a commonwealth. The rules of a commonwealth are too hard for the bulk of mankind to come up to; that form of government requireth such a spirit to carry it on as doth not dwell in great numbers, but is restrained to so very few, especially in this age, that, let the methods appear never so reasonable in paper, they must fail in practice, which will ever be suited more to men's nature as it is than as it should be.

The question was settled for the time by the Revolution — but not finally. Give but a slight change to the terms and the dispute is again as active and rancorous in the twentieth century here in America as it was two hundred years ago in the England of the Stuarts. For the prerogative of the Crown substitute only the privilege of property, and for the commonwealth substitute the various schemes for making the will of the people immediately effective, and you have a situation in which the Trimmer is represented by the abhorred Reactionary, who, like Halifax, but haply not with his success, would stand against the tides of emotional drifting.

As the sovereign power behind the government, whether that were to be called limited monarchy or limited democracy, Halifax saw the majesty of Law. His idealization of Law, as the firm and slowly changing reason of a nation contrasted with the inconsiderate impulse of the moment, was indeed no new thing. It was distinctly the lesson of the long and grave experi-

ence of Rome in governing the world, and it had received, so far as I know, its earliest and still its noblest expression on the lips of Socrates in the jail of Athens, when, to the offer of his rich friends to bribe his way into liberty, he couched his reply in the personified voice of his city. This same mystic voice whose sound so murmured in the ears of Socrates that he could listen to no other, though speaking now in a different tongue and to different ends, may be heard in the superb exordium of the Trimmer's apology:

> Our Trimmer, as he hath a great veneration for Laws in general, so he hath a more particular for our own. He looketh upon them as the chains that tie up our unruly passions, which else, like wild beasts let loose, would reduce the world into its first state of barbarism and hostility. The good things we enjoy we owe to them; and all the ill things we are freed from is by their protection. . . .
>
> They are to mankind that which the sun is to plants, whilst it cherisheth and preserveth them. Where they have their force and are not clouded or suppressed, everything smileth and flourisheth; but where they are darkened and not suffered to shine out, it maketh everything to wither and decay.
>
> They secure men, not only against one another, but against themselves, too. They are a sanctuary to which the Crown hath occasion to resort as often as the people, so that it is an interest as well as a duty to preserve them.

Such is the majestic idea of Law which Halifax really had in mind to set up as the true sovereign,

in place of Hobbes's notion of the universal will of the people concentrated by mutual bargain and concession in the person of the monarch, or in place of the benevolent despot which was to be formulated by Bolingbroke and disastrously imitated by George III. It rested on a supreme "passion for liberty," which the Trimmer held "to be the foundation of all virtue and the only seasoning that giveth a relish to life." And equally, in the last resort, it rested on the conviction that "there is a soul in that great body of the people," and that, "when all is said, there is a natural reason of State, an undefinable thing grounded upon the common good of mankind, which is immortal, and in all changes and revolutions still preserveth its original right of saving a nation, when the letter of the law perhaps would destroy it; and by whatsoever means it moveth, carrieth a power with it that admitteth of no opposition, being supported by Nature, which inspireth an immediate consent at some critical times into every individual member to that which visibly tendeth to preservation of the whole." But if Law, as thus conceived by Halifax, depends in the final test for efficacy on the consent of the governed, it implies also a settled mistrust of the first motions of human nature. It is the experience of time against the desires of the present, a restraining force imposed upon the action of the nation comparable to the habits grafted upon

the individual man in childhood. As the Trimmer says, Law is a security for men not only against one another, but against themselves.

How deep this mistrust of uncontrolled human nature extended in the case of Halifax can be better learned from the three little groups of *Thoughts and Reflections* published posthumously from his papers in 1750. For models in English Halifax had the *Essays* of Bacon, the *Leviathan* and *Behemoth* of Hobbes, and the *Table Talk* of John Selden, the last-named like himself a Trimmer. In French he had the *Maxims* of La Rochefoucauld and, more particularly, the *Characters* of La Bruyère, to which his work approaches most nearly in style and ideas. In compass and minuteness of observation he no doubt falls behind his French model; nor has he the literary neatness due as much to the finer resources of the language of the *Characters* as to the conscientious labour of their author. But he possesses in compensation a certain honesty of his own, and a memorable gravity born of practical experience. What he learned from the business of life is pretty well summed up in the brief chapter entitled *Of the World:*

> It is from the shortness of thought that men imagine there is any great variety in the world.
>
> Time hath thrown a vail upon the faults of former ages, or else we should see the same deformities we condemn in the present times.

When a man looketh upon the rules that are made, he will think there can be no faults in the world; and when he looketh upon the faults, there are so many he will be tempted to think there are no rules.

They are not to be reconciled, otherwise than by concluding that which is called frailty is the incurable nature of mankind.

A man that understandeth the world must be weary of it; and a man who doth not, for that reason ought not to be pleased with it.

The uncertainty of what is to come is such a dark cloud that neither reason nor religion can quite break through it; and the condition of mankind is to be weary of what we do know, and afraid of what we do not.

The world is beholden to generous mistakes for the greatest part of the good that is done in it.

Our vices and virtues couple with one another and get children that resemble both their parents.

If a man can hardly inquire into a thing he undervalueth, how can a man of good sense take pains to understand the world?

To understand the world, and to like it, are two things not easily to be reconciled.

That which is called an able man is a great overvaluer of the world, and all that belongeth to it. [True, no doubt, of the ordinary efficient, successful man, but scarcely true of the great practical genius, such as a Cæsar or a Napoleon.]

All that can be said of him is, that he maketh the best of the general mistake.

It is the fools and the knaves that make the wheels of the world turn. They are the world; those few who have sense or honesty sneak up and down single, but never go in herds.

To be too much troubled is a worse way of over-valuing the world than the being too much pleased.

A man that steps aside from the world, and hath leisure to observe it without interest or design, thinks all mankind as mad as they think him, for not agreeing with them in their mistakes.

First of all, one is struck in these aphorisms by the writer's feeling of superiority to the common interests of life. "The government of the world is a great thing," he declares elsewhere; "but it is a very coarse one too, compared with the fineness of speculative knowledge." And this is the view of La Bruyère: "Je ne mets au-dessus d'un grand politique que celui qui néglige de le devenir, et qui se persuade de plus en plus que le monde ne mérite point qu'on s'en occupe." Something of this rather chilly aloofness in our English statesman, which was felt and resented by his contemporaries, was due to philosophy; something of it also sprang from foiled vanity no doubt. But, lest we ascribe too much weight to his personal pique, it must be remembered that he has, in *The Trimmer*, written one of the most magnanimous passages in the English tongue on the passion of patriotism and one of the noblest encomiums of his native land. If pressed, he might, perhaps, have admitted cynically that such a passion was to be included among the "generous mistakes" to which the world is beholden for its good, but at least no man of his age made of it a purer call to the patient performance of duty. And it is to be remembered also that in

the most admired words he ever wrote, the peroration in praise of Truth, he represents that goddess as no indifferent idol of the schools, but as the active, though long-suffering, judge of righteousness. Altogether he would have subscribed, in his softer moments, to that other *Jugement* of La Bruyère: "Il y a une philosophie qui nous élève au-dessus de l'ambition et de la fortune. . . . Il y a une autre philosophie qui nous soumet et nous assujétit à toutes ces choses en faveur de nos proches ou de nos amis: c'est la meilleure."

With the memory of these things in mind we shall not go astray in interpreting his chapter *Of the World* in some such way as this: Life at bottom is a vain and endless repetition of things that have no outcome. Men are but frail creatures, forever reforming and correcting themselves, yet never cured of their weakness. They are divided in the mass into fools and knaves, and only by the malleability of the former and by the selfish practices of the latter is the common business of society kept in motion. Even the knave is a fool in a way, for he is deceived in his valuation of the things he seeks, whereas the man who really knows the world must be weary of its emptiness. From such a dilemma there is only one escape for wisdom, and that is into a higher folly, as human speech must call it, a folly which acts without illusion and without attachment, waiting serenely for the approbation of the everlasting Truth.

We shall not be wrong, I am sure, in giving this slightly mystical turn to what might be called the active aloofness of our statesman; but, withal, we must acknowledge that such a philosophy is more implicit than explicit in his writings, as it no doubt was in his mind and acts. The flavour of his aphorisms as a whole gives, let us admit, something of the bitterness of a man who, having accomplished much, yet retires from the world a little disappointed, and who takes a private revenge on society by anatomizing the secret motives of its activity. I quote, somewhat at random, a few of the shrewder epigrams:

It is in a disorderly Government as in a river, the lightest things swim at the top.

In Parliaments men wrangle in behalf of liberty, that do as little care for it as they deserve it.

Wherever a knave is not punished, an honest man is laughed at.

The dependence of a great man upon a greater is a subjection that lower men cannot easily comprehend.

A fool hath no dialogue within himself; the first thought carrieth him without the reply of a second.

Till follies become ruinous, the world is better with than it would be without them. [The wisdom of the Trimmer then, and now, and always.]

Men must be saved in this world by their want of faith.

All are apt to shrink from those that lean upon them.

The struggling for knowledge hath a pleasure in it like that of wrestling with a fine woman.

The hardest thing in the world is to give the thoughts due liberty, and yet retain them in due discipline.

Right good-manners require so much sense, that there is hardly any such thing in the world.

The greatest part of the business of the world is the effect of not thinking.

A man that loveth himself right will do every thing else right.

The question remains how far this Savilian philosophy is peculiar to the writer and his age, and how far it is applicable to other times, even to our own. It cannot be gainsaid that public life in England in the Revolutionary years following the Rebellion, the life from which Halifax drew his knowledge of human nature, was in some respects abnormal. For historical reasons which we need not here analyse the game of politics was more than usually acrid: personal ambitions were entangled with views of the State in a way to bewilder the conscience of actors and observers, and the changes and uncertainty of allegiance, to a certain extent necessary under the confusion of government, obscured the boundary between honourable prudence and treachery and so placed an almost intolerable burden on the integrity of the individual. Certainly the conditions of public life have changed somewhat since then, and a philosophy drawn from those conditions will seem at least out of proportion in more normal times. Yet we must not therefore imagine the change to have been radical. A close observer of political life as it was exhibited only last year (1912) in

our own Presidential campaign, when Rooseveltian Progressives were at war with their old associates, must have seen in the behaviour of party leaders an aspect of human nature not unlike that which inspired the Savilian philosophy — the same confusion of ethical standards, the same mingling of personal malice and public service, the same underlying vanities.

The alteration from Halifax's day to ours will be found, after all, a matter of degree only, and not of kind. The value of studying the acts of politicians lies for the moralist in the magnifying effect, so to speak, of public life; the motives by which they are guided and the goals for which they strive are not different from those of private men, but larger and stronger and clearer. And so, for the student of human nature, the age of Halifax will have a peculiar significance because of the very exaggeration of political conditions and the consequent upwelling into the light of day of those deeper sources of human conduct which in other ages are more or less obscured and repudiated. What seemed to the statesman under Charles and James the Second the ruling impulse of mankind may be learned from his aphorisms:

Malice may be sometimes out of breath, envy never. A man may make peace with hatred, but never with envy.

Envy taketh the shape of flattery, and that maketh men hug it so close that they cannot part with it.

Men often mistake themselves, but they never forget themselves.

Invidia festos dies non agit, Bacon had written, envy keeps no holidays; "of all other affections it is the most importune and continual." Yet, withal, envy is a harsh word and may be out of favour in a softened society; Halifax himself, were he writing to-day, would probably change it for a gentler equivalent. He would acknowledge in the hearts of men moments of finer impulse and higher vision, as he acknowledged them in the hearts of the men he actually knew; he would see that conduct is largely the result of no conscious moral sense at all, but the mere result of a social compulsion or habit; but if he remained true to his philosophy he would say that, in an age when the sharp distinctions between friend and foe are for the most part obliterated, the common, almost universal motive of man in relation to man is a kind of dull jealousy.

I am aware that such an analysis of human nature will be hateful to an age in which, if we believe anything, it is the comfortable doctrine that men are by instinct all seeking the welfare of some one else. But, alas, there is only one thing to say to this humanitarian theory: it is not true. The very element of self-flattery in such a philosophy, the very hesitation to accept any harsh name for our guiding motives, points unmistakably to that grain of egotism in our make-up which is the

last source and the impregnable stronghold of jealousy. Let a man look inquisitively into the conduct of his neighbour, let him look candidly into the secret folds of his own heart, and he will discern that feeling, concealed, it may be, but never quite ejected, colouring, though it may not entirely overlay, other more generous impulses. Is there not in our facile rejection itself of the past a touch of jealous apprehension lest something should be detracted from our easy complaisance with the aims and achievements of the present? Indeed, deep down in the democratic view of society there will be found a taint of this same egotism, displaying itself in a kind of *malaise* at distinction wherever seen and however manifested. He is the leader of men who soothes us with the assurance that our native instincts are right and not to be gainsaid, and who falls in with our suspicion of those who would oppose reflection to spontaneity and would question the clamour of the moment. It is the bitter truth that the only safeguard against popular anarchy, in this day as in Halifax's, is just the recognition of the egotism that underlies our first motions, with its uneasy flattery of ourselves and its readiness to flame into jealousy of those who speak from the superior ground of knowledge. Certain it is that without this clear insight into human nature there is no stable authority for law as there is no firm basis for social order.

It would be supremely interesting to know how Halifax to-day would modify the language of his philosophy in developing this milder and, in a way, diminished ruling passion of unconscious jealousy in place of the franker envy he beheld in the political society about him. As it is, we see the fibres of human nature magnified in his *Reflections* as under a microscope, perhaps also a little distorted.

A BLUESTOCKING OF THE RESTORATION

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THE collected works[1] of the famous, or notorious, Aphra Behn, attractively printed, offer a desirable addition to the library of the scholar or the gentleman, and both these model men of letters will thank Mr. Summers for his industry as editor and biographer. But beyond the acknowledgement of zeal in collecting material and furnishing helpful annotations I question whether praise can honestly go. It is rather a pity that Mr. Summers should have followed the primrose path of pedantry in reproducing the original typography. Such a procedure at once looks learned and saves labour, but the profit to any one is questionable, and Mrs. Behn's prose, in particular, would have been made more comfortable for the "good, sweet, honey, sugar-candied reader," as she calls the like of us, by the adoption of modern spelling and punctuation.

And so in the biographical sketch introducing the first volume it may appear that the editor's zeal outruns his judgement. Some of the points in his characterization of Mrs. Behn need verification: one would like, for instance, remem-

[1] *The Works of Aphra Behn.* Edited by Montague Summers. 6 volumes. London: William Heinemann; Stratford-on-Avon: A. H. Bullen. 1915.

bering the temper of Grub Street in those days, to be more fully assured that she was a "warm helper and ally of every struggling writer." Nor is the critical reader likely to be content with Mr. Summers's treatment of the more concrete facts of her life. In 1884 Mr. Edmund Gosse published in the *Athenæum* a note of the Countess of Winchelsea from a manuscript volume of her poems, to this effect:

> Mrs. Behn was Daughter to a Barber, who liv'd formerly in Wye, a little Market Town (now much decay'd) in Kent. Though the account of her life before her Works pretends otherwise; some Persons now alive Do testify upon their Knowledge that to be her Original.

Now, why should Mr. Summers accept this statement of the birthplace of Mrs. Behn, yet reject the trade of her father? "We know," he says, "from recent investigation that John Amis did not follow a barber's trade, but was probably of good old stock." If there is any positive investigation of this sort, he should have given it. In itself it is of the slightest importance whether Amis was or was not a barber, but the answer has some bearing on a question that concerns the lady's veracity as an author, and it is to this larger matter Mr. Summers is looking.

Mrs. Behn pretends that her story of *Oroonoko* is based on her personal observations in Surinam. It has been generally believed that her

father was appointed governor of the colony, and that the daughter, then unmarried, sailed with him to America and continued her voyage after his death at sea. According to her own account she was received with honours at Surinam and lodged in the best house of the colony. In two trenchant articles (in the *Kittredge Anniversary Papers*, 1913, and the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, vol. XXVIII) Mr. Ernest Bernbaum has undertaken to discredit this whole Surinam story as a piece of fiction, and one of his points is the unlikelihood that a man professionally a barber should have been appointed governor of a colony; hence these tears of Mrs. Behn's latest defender. It may be true that Mr. Bernbaum, on his side, has been overindustrious in scepticism; possibly the lady really was in some part of America, as she protests in her novel; but, certainly, Mr. Summers has made out a poor case for the defence. "I was an eye-witness," she says, "to a great part of what you will find here set down, and what I could not be witness of I received from the mouth of the chief actor." That sounds categorical enough, but as a matter of fact it is the mere trick of a pretended realism. In another of her novels, *The Fair Jilt*, she makes the same sort of protest, announcing herself an eye-witness of the events and asserting that "every circumstance, to a tittle, is truth"; yet how any sane critic can

regard this tale otherwise than as a bit of romantic fiction, is more than I can understand. To return to *Oroonoko*, I think Mr. Bernbaum entirely right in holding that the perfectly fantastic account of the scenery and fauna of Surinam is an indication, so far as it is evidence at all, that the author was never in that part of the world. In both physical and moral traits her portrait of Oroonoko himself is unreal to the last degree; it is so palpably romance that I for one am amazed at the traditional gullibility of historians of literature. "The royal slave she unquestionably knew, and knew well," says Professor H. S. Canby in *The Short Story in English;* such a statement is the mere abnegation of common sense.

So, again, Mr. Bernbaum has, I think, proved that much of the accepted business of Mrs. Behn's activities as an English political spy is invention. Even Mr. Summers admits that in the *History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn*, by Charles Gildon, "a romance, full as amorous and sensational as any novel of the day, has been woven about her sojourn at Antwerp." Why, then, when it comes to matters that Mr. Summers desires to believe, does he declare it impossible "that her contemporaries should have glibly accepted the fiction of a voyage to Surinam and a Dutch husband named Behn who never existed"?

Mr. Summers's zeal to reëstablish the heroic

legend of Mrs. Behn's life is more creditable to his heart than to his head. These are the bare facts we know: Aphra (or Ayfara or Aphara) Amis (or Amies), who later, rightly or wrongly, called herself Mrs. Behn, was born at Wye in 1640, her father being probably a barber. In her youth she may have been in America. In 1666 she was at Antwerp in the service of the English spy system, and like other agents of the sort got more promises than cash in pay for her troubles. She returned to England in 1667, and "the rest of her life," as the early *Memoir* says, "was entirely dedicated to pleasure and poetry, the success in which gained her the acquaintance and friendship of the most sensible men of the age, and the love of not a few of different characters; for though a sot have no portion of wit of his own, he yet, like Old Age, covets what he cannot enjoy."

Her literary ventures can be followed, and some of her friendships of a more or less dubious character. Naturally, she had to run the gauntlet of malediction, as it was raised to a fine art in those days by the gentlemen of Grub Street; to one of these, an ironist, she was a "chaste Sappho," to the infamous Tom Brown she was — like the rest of his world. We may discount the ribaldry, yet suspect that a woman who could dedicate a lewd play to "Mrs. Ellen Guin," as an "excellent and perfect creature" nearly akin to the "divine powers," might be of easy morality.

Colonel Colepepper declared her to be "a most beautiful woman," and Lely's portrait of her does not much contradict him. Life went hard with her, as it did with others of her sex who had the temerity to enter the battle of the wits. They all learned too late the truth of Lansdowne's couplet:

> In Fate's eternal volumes it is writ,
> That women ever shall be foes to wit.

She died in 1689, and was buried in the cloister of Westminster Abbey. On the marble slab that covers her remains are graven these two lines:

> Here lies a Proof that Wit can never be
> Defence enough against Mortality.

The desire of Mr. Summers to reëstablish the legend of his heroine's life is easily explained by the natural zeal of an editor to make the most of his subject, and the same explanation will apply to his exaggerated estimate of the literary value of her works. He may be justified in rebuking as "mid-Victorian" (the most opprobrious epithet conceivable to the modern enlightenment) Miss Julia Kavanaugh's denunciation of Mrs. Behn's indelicacy as "useless and worse than useless, the superfluous addition of a corrupt mind and vitiated taste." Such a style of criticism is at least unhistorical, nor is the immorality of her comedies so much a "superfluous addition" as an essential element of the wit of the day. Mr. Doran,

also, had certainly lost the sense of perspective when he declared that "No one equalled this woman in downright nastiness save Ravenscroft and Wycherley. . . . She was a mere harlot, who danced through uncleanness and dared them [the male dramatists] to follow." She had not quite this preëminence of evil. But Mr. Summers goes to the other extreme when he slurs over her impudicity as a mere "wantoning beyond the bounds of niggard propriety." To belittle in this way the importance of ethical truth in literature is to surrender the most decisive instrument in the hands of the critic. It is equally unhistorical to select Mrs. Behn for special reprobation and to affect a callousness to the vicious character of the whole movement to which she belongs. Furthermore, apart from the moral question and in the matter of ability alone, there is some partiality in ranking her as a comedian "with the greatest dramatists of her day." That is surely to place her a grade too high. Again, in relation to her work as a novelist, eminent as her position here undoubtedly is, Mr. Summers would have been wiser not to make a parade of Macaulay's words "that the best of Defoe was 'in no respect... beyond the reach of Aphra Behn.'" I have not tried to trace the context of Macaulay's statement, but it is a palpable absurdity to say that anything in *Oroonoko* or *The Fair Jilt* has the touch of creative power displayed in the great

scenes of *Robinson Crusoe*. Such over-praise is likely to provoke the other extreme of judgement, as expressed by Trollope in his *Autobiography:* "I never... read more detestable trash than the stories written by Mrs. Aphra Behn."

No, the common estimate is right in placing Mrs. Behn below the greatest names of the Restoration, though there may still be some injustice in the degree of neglect which she has suffered, and which we may thank Mr. Summers for attempting to bring to an end. Of her comedies I should say that the distinguishing mark is just the absence, or at least the very rare appearance, of that force of original genius which one feels in Congreve and Wycherley, and the presence of a fruitful cleverness in working and recombining what was then the common material of the stage. In a certain sense, I admit, the originality of any of these writers is of rather a low degree, for it would be hard to point to any outstanding literary movement more hidebound by convention than this whole Restoration drama. The formula of the convention may be found in almost any comedy of the period, but for their neatness I take the speeches of two of Wycherley's ladies in a single scene. "Foh!" cries one of the knowing females of *The Country Wife* (II, i), "'t is a nasty world"; and another is more specific, in characterizing a gentleman of their world: "I'm satisfied you are of the society of

the wits and raillieurs, since you cannot spare your friend, even when he is too civil to you; but the surest sign is, since you are an enemy to marriage."

It is scarcely too much to say that the voluble battle of words which makes the sum of Restoration wit is little more than an endless ringing of the changes on these two sapient utterances. They give the authoritative rule for plot and characterization. The earlier ebullience of spirits, as seen in the Elizabethan comedy, is sharpened to a professional game of wit, which seeks to pierce the mask of apparent decency and to make a jest of indecency. The play of the passions, in which love, or lust, had naturally from the first been predominant, is contracted to this field alone, and desire is regarded as genuine only when it is illegitimate. Hence the two motives that govern the puppets of the stage: the ambition to get the better of a friend or enemy in clever persiflage, and the game of chasing down some woman — or it may be a woman who pursues the man — with a running fire at the baseness of marriage as an obstacle to the sport.

It will appear that I, for one, do not feel towards these writers as Charles Lamb professed, rather whimsically, to accept them. It is pleasant enough, no doubt, now and then "to take an airing beyond the diocese of the strict conscience," and there may be a healthy relaxation

in getting at times into a complete "privation of moral light" — if it were n't for the odour! The smell of the thing in that darkness cannot be concealed; the very reek and noisomeness of it prevent you from walking there for long as in a place of immaterial fancy. Nor can I accept Mr. Summers's plea for the makers of this comedy. "There has been," he says, "no more popular mistake, nor yet one more productive, not merely of nonsense and bad criticism, but even of actual malice and evil, than the easy error of confounding an author with the characters he creates." The error is common enough and easy enough — Mr. Summers himself falls into it headlong in his effort to reëstablish the legendary life of his heroine — but however true it may be that a good author may create bad characters, it is also true that we ought to hold him to account for the moral atmosphere, so to speak, in which he envelops his characters. It is a nasty thing to take complacence in creating a nasty world, and there's an end on't.

On the other hand, it is equally difficult to accept some of the conclusions drawn by Mr. Bernbaum in his otherwise excellent study, recently published, of *The Drama of Sensibility*. With the performance of Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, in 1696, he sees, rightly, I think, the introduction of a new principle, which gradually usurped the place of the traditional philosophy

and, spreading from one branch of literature to another, was to change our whole view of life. Comedy hitherto had been based on the perception of evil and folly as essentially inherent in human nature; it undertook to strip off the disguise of hypocrisy and to expose the real foibles and vices behind them. Like Wycherley's Manly, the comedian "spoke ill of most men because they deserved it." The new school of writers would proceed on the very opposite principle:

> Confidence in the goodness of average human nature [says Mr. Bernbaum] is the mainspring of sentimentalism. That confidence became in the eighteenth century the cardinal point of a new gospel, and the underlying ethical principle of a new school of literature. It was the fundamental assumption of the dramatists of sensibility. Richard Steele recommends one of his sentimental comedies because it "makes us approve ourselves more." Denis Diderot, the enthusiastic advocate of sentimentalism in drama and in life, writes:
>
> "I repeat it, — the virtuous, the virtuous. It touches us in a manner more intimate and more sweet than whatever excites our contempt and our laughter. Poet, are you a man of sensibility and of tender feelings? Then strike that note, and you will hear it resound or tremble in every heart.
>
> "'Do you mean to say that human nature is good?'
>
> "Yes, my friend; it is very good. Water, air, earth, fire, — everything in nature is good. . . . It is wretched conventionalities that pervert man. Human nature should not be accused."

Hence it would be the aim of the new literature to represent evil as an accident of conduct

imposed on the erring individual by some conspiracy of fate or constraint of society; instead of lashing or ridiculing the vicious and the foolish, the new comedy would appeal to our sympathy for them as the victims of circumstance; instead of affecting us with indignation or laughter, it would evoke our tears.

This distinction in itself is important and true, and Mr. Bernbaum has done a real service to letters in drawing it out historically. But it is questionable whether he has not fallen into error, or at least into some degree of disproportion, in his ethical judgement of the regular comedy of the Restoration. To him Congreve and Wycherley and Mrs. Behn and the rest of them seem not to have been, as I represent them, wallowing contentedly in nastiness, but were attempting to reform their world by holding the mirror up to nature after the traditional manner of the satirist. To support this view he cites a number of passages from the prologues and introductions of the day, which, it must be admitted, are pertinent and convincing if taken at their face value. Thus he quotes Vanbrugh's defence of himself: "The business of comedy is to show people what they should do by representing them upon the stage doing what they should not do." He might have extended indefinitely the list of these virtuous declarations, including, for instance, Mrs. Behn's lofty appeal in one of her dedicatory

letters to Cardinal Richelieu's avowal that plays are "the schools of virtue, where vice is always either punished or disdained; they are secret instructions to the people in things that 't is impossible to insinuate into them any other way, etc." But the question is whether these noble protestations are to be taken at their face value. No doubt these purveyors of amusement felt the twinges of conscience at times, and tried to flatter themselves by posing as the moral censors of the age; but I strongly suspect that their pious sentiments were in part uttered in pure self-defence, with a good tinge of hypocrisy, and in part were mere echoes of the commonplace of Renaissance criticism which sought to justify the existence of literature by its ethical effect. I suspect that the Lady Aphra was speaking closer to the mark for herself and her contemporaries when, in the Epistle prefixed to another of her comedies, she said:

> In my judgement the increasing number of our latter plays have not done much more towards the amending of men's morals, or their wit, than hath the frequent preaching which this last age hath been pestered with. . . . As for comedy, . . . it hath happened so spitefully in several plays which have been pretty well received of late, that even those persons that were meant to be the ingenious censors of the play, have either proved the most debauched or most unwitty people in the company. Nor is this error very lamentable, since, as I take it, comedy was never meant either for a converting or a conforming ordinance.

So Mrs. Behn took her art when she spoke sincerely. These plays were designed for amusement, to bring new zest into a life haunted by the fear of *ennui*, and as the audience for whom they were primarily composed got its pleasure out of debauchery, they were themselves simply debauched. Those who, like Charles Lamb, find a note of exhilaration in the very perfection of this immorality, are playing paradoxically with their own innocence; while those who, like Mr. Bernbaum, look upon such a literature as "a converting or a conforming ordinance," have, I fear, lost for the moment their historical sense. As for the latter view, let us test the example which Mr. Bernbaum himself upholds as an illustration of honest satire and defends against the censures of the "serious moralists" who had begun to decry the corruption of the stage.

The plot of Wycherley's *Country Wife*, from which we have already selected two speeches as characteristic of Restoration comedy, is built about a simple and, for the purpose, admirable device. The hero, a Mr. Horner of ominous name, having returned to the city from France, bribes a quack doctor to spread the report that he is "as bad as an eunuch," and thus acquires easy access to the free votaresses of pleasure and to the wives of jealous husbands. He is, as Steele describes him in the *Tatler* of April 16, 1709, "a good representation of the age in which that

comedy was written: at which time love and wenching were the business of life, and the gallant manner of pursuing women was the best recommendation at court." The moral censors complained that the dramatist had made him successful in his illicit amours and had let him escape without reprimand. To this charge Mr. Bernbaum replies that "Horner's successes were a necessary means to the satiric ends of the play, — to the thorough exposure of Mrs. Fidget and Mrs. Squeamish, women who were at heart unchaste but who were scrupulously careful of their reputation, and the hollowness of whose virtue could not have been fully demonstrated except under the circumstances which Horner created. These women, as well as Pinchwife and Margery, comprised the principal objects of Wycherley's satire, and were duly punished; but it was a practical impossibility to visit poetic justice upon every character of the play."

Now, Mr. Bernbaum is no doubt right in saying that the object of the play was the exposure of pretension, although he rather unduly limits the scope of the satire: one need look at the first scene only to see that the exposure includes the pretension of a Sparkish to wit as well as that of a Mrs. Fidget and a Mrs. Squeamish to chastity. That double theme of ridicule was in fact the constant and infallible resource of all the comedians; but we shall miss the point if we fail to

observe a radical difference in their modes of attacking these two forms of charlatanry. The name of virtue was in their eyes equivalent to the assumption of something that did not exist. I do not, of course, mean such a statement to be taken too absolutely, for they could not altogether forget that they were human beings, even when they wrote for the stage. The cleverest of the rogues may suffer the defeat of marriage, and a play may end with the seeming propriety of a Victorian novel; but no one is deceived: the priest is only pander writ large. There is, in this very play, *The Country Wife*, a virgin who utters an occasional sentiment both virtuous and magnanimous, and various other decent characters managed to show themselves on the stage without contamination; but they are extremely few and mostly fools; the whole zest of this world of the footlights lay in the "privation of moral light."

With the matter of wit, however, it was different. These stimulators of pleasure for the court may not have believed in virtue, or may have believed in it very feebly, but they had a strong conviction of the reality and value of wit. Indeed the soul of wit lay in its ability to detect the hollowness of pretending to a thing that did not exist, and in its power to "accelerate felicity" out of what one of Mrs. Behn's women calls the "volubility and vicissitude in human affairs."

It was no mechanic limit to the possibility of visiting poetic justice that tied Wycherley's hands; his lusty scapegrace escaped censure because by a clever and successful ruse he proved himself a true hero of wit. In this *The Country Wife* may justly be regarded as a model play of its school: it does not penalize vice, but only the profession of virtue; folly is satirized, whether in its own dull complacent self or in its pretension to wit; but the worst of all offenders is the pretender at once to wit and successful vice, of which damnable hypocrisy Mr. Horner is the shining opposite.

Ethically considered this wit of the Restoration belongs to a brief interval of transition, and needs to be distinguished from what preceded and what followed. In one point its tone may seem to agree with that of comedy before the Rebellion, but even here the difference is more significant than the resemblance. In the earlier writers the darkness of evil is made hateful by an implied or explicit contrast with the light of a traditional ideal of virtue. The ideal may not be very certain, it may be almost lost, so that ethical judgement fades away into the licence of rollicking fun; but it is not denied as a convention, and it can be found lurking somewhere in the background, if not in full sight. Even in the comedy of a Fletcher, where the belief in virtue is already vanishing in a cloud of indifference, there

is a feeling of abundant animal life which still retains the faculty of resisting a universal corruption, and there are isolated scenes in which the loveliness of chastity is painted with exquisite tenderness. But with the gloomy failure of the Commonwealth of the saints a change comes. It was the very creed of those who were now thrown to the surface in the boiling cauldron of the age to deny the reality of those ideas of virtue and sanctity which had been the occasion of so much confusion. So Robert Gould writes his *Satire Against Man*, half in the sceptical tone of the reigning school, half in a spirit of alarm at the completeness of their scepticism:

> Slave to his passions, ev'ry sev'ral lust
> Whisks him about, as whirlwinds do the dust;
> And dust he is indeed, a senseless clod,
> That swells, and would be yet believed a God. . . .

That is Gould's own notion of mankind, though he has the proper indignation against the wits who live and write accordingly:

> But that we may the monster undisguise
> We'll first (as in the scale of truth it lies)
> Lay open what a modern wit implies:
> An impious wretch that Scripture ridicules,
> And thinks the men that dare not do it fools;
> A lustful goat, who to be fully known
> For what he is, does pick and cull the town
> For maids and wives —

the rest is better unquoted.

The *êthos* of the Restoration wits was, as a whole and with due reservations, not so much a licence of high spirits as a complacent cynicism. Out of this cynicism the drama of sensibility, preluding the rise of a whole new literature, came as a natural reaction, but it introduced an error as vicious in its consequences as that against which it revolted. At least the cynicism of disillusion was free of the lying spirit of flattery, the cowardly fear of facts, which has spread like a mouldy disease through so much of modern writing. "In this book," said Dr. Johnson of Lord Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, laying his finger as usual on the quick of the matter, "it is maintained that virtue is natural to man, and that if we would but consult our own hearts, we should be virtuous. Now, after consulting our own hearts all we can, and with all the helps we have, we find how few of us are virtuous. This is saying a thing which all mankind know not to be true." Far nearer the truth was the development of the wit of complacent cynicism into the wit of satire, as we see it in Swift and Pope. I would not place the *êthos* of this new satire too high; it retained too much of the Restoration one-sidedness, and restored too little of the more balanced view of human nature which was lost — lost for how long a time? But the indignation of a Swift was altogether a sounder passion than the trifling mockery of a Rochester, and the law of hatred that

governed the little band of Tories who fell with Bolingbroke, indiscriminate though it may seem, was a tonic restorative after the kind of laughter that succeeded in the court of Charles the Second.

In regard to the literary value of the comedy in which Mrs. Behn made her name critics will differ according to the degree of importance they attach to ethical tone as a factor of interest and according to the measure of their resistance to the deadening effects of monotony. For my part a few of these plays — notably two or three of Congreve's and Wycherley's — never fail to intrigue me by their audacity and by their extraordinary resourcefulness within a narrowly circumscribed field; but in general the conventions of the *genre* are so apparent and so tyrannical that my attention soon flags and I find myself yawning. The Roman emperor discovered long ago the monotony of mere vice, but vice grows really pitiful when it has no more variety than it seems to have offered to these hard-worked panders of the stage. One often wishes they had taken to heart the advice of Rochester:

> Farewell, woman, I intend
> Henceforth every night to sit
> With my lewd well-natured friend,
> Drinking to engender wit.

I suspect the conversion of Rochester in the end was due less to the pious ministrations of

Dr. Burnet than to the memory of the frightful *ennui* that had pursued him and his kind in their heartless search for diversion. "The hand of God touched him; . . . it was not only a general dark melancholy over his mind, such as he had formerly felt, but a most penetrating cuttng sorrow."

Such is the field in which our female comedian bravely raised a lance amid the masculine champions of the day, and if she did not prove herself quite the equal of her greater adversaries, she at least won no dishonourable place in the lists. Occasionally she shows the working of another spirit, as if a breath from an earlier world blew across the stage. There is, for example, a scene in *A Night's Intrigue* (IV, i) which is almost poetry and deserves a moment's special attention. Briefly the situation is this: Fillamour is in love with Marcella, who, being contracted to another man, has escaped to Rome disguised as a courtesan. Fillamour, with his less scrupulous friend Galliard, is discovered in her chamber, and we have a pretty play of cross-purposes, the lady making trial of his constancy under the protection of her disguise, and Fillamour being troubled by her resemblance to her real self:

Fil. Hah! the fair enchantress.
[*Enter Mar. richly and loosely dressed.*
Mar. What, on your guard, my lovely cavalier? Lies there a danger

In this face and eyes, that needs that rough resistance? —
Hide, hide that mark of anger from my sight,
And if thou wouldst be absolute conqueror here,
Put on soft looks, with eyes all languishing,
Words tender, gentle sighs, and kind desires.
Gal. Death! with what unconcern he hears all this. —
Art thou possessed? Pox, why dost not answer her?
Mar. (*Aside.*) I hope he will not yield. He stands unmoved.
Surely I was mistaken in this face,
And I believe in charms that have no power.
Gal. (*Aside.*) 'Sdeath, thou deservest not such a noble creature;
I'll have 'em both myself.
Fil. (*Pausingly.*) Yes, thou hast wondrous power,
And I have felt it long.
Mar. How!
Fil. I've often seen that face — but 't was in dreams —
And sleeping loved extremely,
And waking, sighed to find it but a dream!
The lovely fantom vanished with my slumbers,
But left a strong Idea on my heart
Of what I find in perfect beauty here, —
But with this difference, she was virtuous, too.
Mar. What silly she was that?
Fil. She whom I dreamed I loved.
Mar. You only dreamt that she was virtuous too;
Virtue itself 's a dream of so slight force,
The very fluttering of Love's wings destroys it;
Ambition, or the meaner hope of interest, wakes it to nothing;
In men a feeble beauty shakes the dull slumber off

The whole scene is such as we might expect to find in a play of Fletcher's, and I doubt if there is

anything better in Mrs. Behn's works; but how tame the language is in comparison with her predecessor's, how the pulse of emotion and the poetry — save in the closing denial of virtue — have gone out of it! That, in a word, is the mark of her hand throughout. When, as is more commonly the case, she abides within the prescribed circle of the Restoration convention, she will display endless cleverness in varying her combinations of the given material, her scenes will be full of bustle, but somehow the creative spark is missing, and her audacity fails to surprise. All the proper elements are here: the broad stream of ridicule flows over the pretenders to virtue and wit and the hypocrites of vice; the *êthos* is true to the norm of a society where "wisdom is but good success in things, and those that fail are fools"; the action is duly confined to the "damnable work this same womankind makes in a nation of fools that are lovers" — she plays the game with zest and cunning, but we soon learn that she has no trump cards in her hand.

Perhaps the most curious proof of her complete subjugation to the material she worked in is the fact that through all her plays you will scarcely find a scene or a sentence indicative of her sex. When speaking for herself she has no such reticence, nor does she try to conceal her resentment for what she regarded as an unjust discrimination against the female wit. "I printed

this play," she says in one of her introductions, "with all the impatient haste one ought to do, who would be vindicated from the most unjust and silly aspersion woman could invent to cast on woman, and which only my being a woman has procured me, *That it was bawdy*, the least and most excusable fault in the men writers, to whose plays they all crowd, as if they came to no other end than to hear what they condemn in this. . . . The play had no other misfortune but that of coming out for a woman; had it been owned by a man, though the most dull unthinking rascally scribbler in town, it had been a most admirable play." So she complains, honestly enough, I dare say; yet in this very comedy, as in her others, there is not a word to indicate the slightest resentment against the conventional relation of the sexes as it was used by a Congreve or a Wycherley: to her as to them love, or lust, is a kind of hurdle race in which marriage is the chief barrier, and woman is merely the goal of man's pleasure. Nor is there a breath of difference in her sense of decency, unless, possibly, she is a little more unconscious of what is indecent. In the same introduction in which she complains of the wrong done the woman writer, she protests that her play contains nothing "that the most innocent virgin can have cause to blush at," and then, in the fourth act, she prints a shameless scene showing how "a man ought to love with

good substantial passion." I doubt if her defence was hypocritical; it seems rather to be an illustration of a woman's inability to stand outside of herself critically.

Mrs. Behn's tragedy, *Abdelazer, or The Moor's Revenge* (adapted from an old play, *Lust's Dominion*), we may pass over with a word: it exhibits a turmoil of gross passions set free from the laws of character. Her romantic drama, *The Young King*, is in the tradition of Beaumont, but without the *morbidezza* that enthralls us in the best of Beaumont's writing. The play is not ill constructed, barring the loose connection of the subsidiary plot, and it has at least the advantage of decency. If we may accept her own statement that it was composed in her youth in America, we may attribute its innocence to her freedom as yet from the influences of the court.

Whatever the merits of Mrs. Behn's work for the stage, her claims to originality will rest upon her prose, which forms the fifth volume of the present collection. Most of this may be dismissed as being quite in the vein of the comedy and romantic drama of the day, but to one of the stories, her *Oroonoko*, must be granted the distinction of giving currency to a new and prolific idea. Of the fantastical unreality of this performance enough has been already said. Even if some of the events of her tale are based on actual occurrences in Surinam, her characterization of the

slave-prince is a piece of pure romanticism; it could not have been drawn from her own observation, nor, so far as I am aware, was it borrowed from any of the contemporary narratives of genuine travel. The conception of the innocence of savage life, as an echo of the universal dream of the Golden Age, was, no doubt, already in the air. It may be found, for instance, in the lines prefixed by Dryden to Charleton's book on Stonehenge, in 1662 or '63:

> Columbus was the first that shook his throne,
> And found a temperate in a torrid zone,
> The feverish air fann'd by a cooling breeze,
> The fruitful vales set round with shady trees,
> And guiltless men, that danc'd away their time,
> Fresh as their groves and happy as their clime.

There are even hints of savage nobility, going beyond mere innocence, in the early literature of the Restoration. But so far as I know (I admit my knowledge makes no pretensions to completeness), the "noble savage" may properly be regarded as an invention of Mrs. Behn's. I am inclined to explain the invention as a kind of happy accident, intelligible enough under the circumstances. Granted her theme, the adventures of an African prince who was kidnapped and sold into slavery, the attribution to him of the heroic virtues of an ideal humanity would follow almost by course. It was the creed of the wits that mankind as they saw it in civilized

society was thoroughly vicious; yet all the while another creed, the deistic belief in the universal goodness of Nature herself, was growing stronger and gathering converts. Out of this contrast of the literary and the deistic creeds, both rooted in the discredit of virtue as a conscious self-discipline, what could be more inevitable than just such a fancy of the purity and excellence of man in his natural state, untouched by the vitiating hand of civilization? Thus the idea of the noble savage arose as a sort of halfway stage between the mockery of the wits and the sentimentalism, or sensibility, which was finally to usurp dominion over literature. When we consider what was to be made of this idea by the political writers of the eighteenth century, we must admit that it was fruitful and dynamic, whether for good or for evil, as few other ideas of history have been. Neither is it without significance that the first clear presentation of the idea (if not the earliest, certainly the first of importance) comes to us from the hand of a woman — and from an Aphra Behn. I suspect, too, that this portrait of Oroonoko as the type of natural goodness, falling in as it did with the incoming current of thought, was more influential in preparing the way for the rise of the true novel than was Mrs. Behn's not inconsiderable skill in telling a story.

There remains only her volume of occasional verse to mention. Much of this poetry is merely

a fluent adaptation from the French, and very little if any of it rises above the Restoration level of mediocrity. Perhaps the best product of her Muse, at least the piece that rings truest and touches the heart most nearly, is the ode written to her friend and, apparently, most constant lover, John Hoyle, at the time of his sickness. The last stanza, through all the conventionality of its language, is as frank as it is tender:

> With pride she saw her rivals sigh and pine,
> And vainly cried, The lovely youth is mine!
> By all thy charms I do conjure thee, live;
> By all the joys thou canst receive and give;
> By each recess and shade where thou and I
> Love's secrets did unfold,
> And did the dull unloving world defy,
> Whilst each the heart's fond story told —
> If all these conjurations nought prevail,
> Not prayers or sighs or tears avail,
> But Heaven has destined we deprived must be
> Of so much youth, wit, beauty, and of thee;
> I will the deaf and angry Powers defy,
> Curse thy decease, bless thee, and with thee die.

Another noteworthy piece is *On Mr. Dryden, Renegade*, which Mr. Summers has resuscitated, a vigorous bit of satire, though unfair and ungenerous. It is pleasanter to turn to the last number of the collection, despite its formidable title: A PINDARIC POEM *to the Reverend Doctor* Burnet, *on the Honour he did me of Enquiring after me and my* MUSE. It was a desperate life, this

war of the wits, into which Astrea had thrust herself, hard for a man, fatal for a woman in those days; we may pity her for the evil fortune of her decline, but we must admire also the magnanimity of her confession in these her last words, stammering though they be, which sound like the voice of one age speaking to another:

'T is to your pen, Great Sir, the nation owes
For all the good this mighty change has wrought;
'T was that the wondrous method did dispose,
Ere the vast work was to perfection brought.
Oh strange effect of a seraphic quill!
That can by unperceptible degrees
Change every notion, every principle,
To any form its great dictator please
. . . . . .
Tho' I the wondrous change deplore
That makes me useless and forlorn,
Yet I the great design adore,
Tho' ruin'd in the universal turn.
Nor can my indigence and lost repose,
Those meagre Furies that surround me close,
Convert my sense and reason more
To this unprecedented enterprise,
Than that a man so great, so learn'd, so wise,
The brave achievement owns and nobly justifies.

SWIFT

SWIFT

In more ways than one Swift holds a peculiar place. He is, I suppose, not much read to-day, by adults at least, yet his name is certainly among the most significant for us in literature. When we think of him, it is likely to be with a shudder for the cruelty of his satire, perhaps the most relentless satire the world has ever known; yet *Gulliver's Travels*, the book into which he distilled his bitterest venom, is now printed chiefly for the entertainment of children. He is personally one of the best-known figures of literary history, still dominating the imagination by that terrible force which awed his contemporaries; yet the mystery that clings about his motives and actions has never been, and is likely never to be, solved. The very groundwork of the man's character is still disputed. To one sentimental lady [1] of our day he appears as the great and clean and typical humanitarian, whereas Thackeray drew back from contemplating "the caverns of his gloomy heart" with shuddering admiration. The man, he cries, "was always alone — alone and gnashing in the darkness, except when Stella's sweet smile came and shone upon him. When

[1] *Dean Swift.* By Sophie Shilleto Smith. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1910.

that went, silence and utter night closed over him. An immense genius: an awful downfall and ruin." For my part, if I had to choose between these two extremes, I should say that Thackeray, though he slandered Swift in the matter of friendship, had drawn the truer portrait, as indeed all the character studies in those marvellous lectures are quite the best thing of their kind in our language.

But I would not say that Thackeray dispels the mystery that hovers about Swift's name. On the contrary, the vivid art of the novelist serves to throw into darker relief the problem of that savage indignation and self-devouring rage; and it is with this problem in our minds that we are likely to approach the six volumes of Swift's Correspondence recently brought to conclusion.[1] Manifestly, it is impossible in a brief essay to give any notion of the variety and importance

[1] *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.* Edited by F. Elrington Ball, with an Introduction by the Right Rev. J. H. Bernard, D.D. 6 volumes. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1910–14. All the known letters to Swift are included as well as those written by him. Dr. Ball's editing is admirable from every point of view. The notes are full, accurate, and apt, offering to the scholar an almost inexhaustible mine of information. Nor, as is too often the case in such editing, is the gentleman-reader ignored. Learning is here a plenty, but pedantry is conspicuous by its absence. The text is spelled and punctuated in modern style, and everything is done to give the impression that one has to do with literature and life, rather than with documents for school exercises.

of the material contained in this great collection of letters. Statesmen, like Harley, Bolingbroke, and Ormond, write of their varying fortunes; churchmen, like King of Dublin and Atterbury, bring the functions of religion into the profane councils of the politicians; the high wits of the day, Addison, Pope, Prior, Gay, make a jest of philosophy and a philosophy of jest; Arbuthnot is here, whom we still love despite his one recorded fault — "really, Brother, you have a sort of shuffle in your gait"; and here are women, high and low, including Vanessa, who gave all for love of the Dean, and lost, and left an ugly stain, I fear, on the Dean's character — only no single word from loyal, ill-spelling Stella, who lost and gained nobody knows how much. To each and all of these the Dean himself writes with a flexibility of mind and a faculty of adaptation which no one would expect from so domineering a soul. The very variety of his tones, ranging from the manner of the dignified churchman to the not-too-squeamish boon companion, adds to the difficulty of coming to terms with the writer. I confess that to me at least the man himself, after all these words to and from him, still hides in darkness; I thought to explore the man's soul, but my little lamp of criticism was extinguished in the heavy air of that cavern.

But one or two things I have seen, or seem to have seen. No one, I think, can read this corre-

spondence without being impressed by the dramatic interest of the closing period of Queen Anne's reign, and by its immense significance not only for the actors involved in the events, but for the whole of England. Even with the omission of the confidential letters, which for obvious reasons were destroyed by the recipients, one feels the passionate tension of the struggle between the Whigs and Tories, and shares something of the confused dismay caused by the rivalry of Oxford and Bolingbroke. But it is only after the victory of Bolingbroke, and the quick-following death of the Queen, with the frightful *débâcle* of the party, that the full bitterness of the players in that desperate game finds an outlet in words. Swift had been "the adviser of the nation's chosen statesmen," one of the centripetal powers that had kept the party from flying into a hundred fragments, and for the Whigs a veritable *malleus maleficorum;* but now, having told Oxford freely that he ought to resign, and having seen that all reconciliation between him and Bolingbroke was impracticable, he retired to the house of a friend at Letcombe in Berkshire. The story of the last battle and rout, as it reached him in letters from London, is one of the climaxes of English history.

The first vivid account of the weakening of the Dragon, as they called Oxford, in Bolingbroke's strangling grasp, comes from Arbuthnot.

"I will plague you a little," the Doctor writes, June 26, 1714, "by telling you that the Dragon dies hard. He is now kicking and cuffing about him like the devil; and you know parliamentary management is the *forte*, but no hopes of any settlement between the two champions." The next stage is noted in Erasmus Lewis's pretty story of the defection of Oxford's main help in the palace, Lady Masham:

> Our female friend told the Dragon in her own house, last Thursday evening, these words: "You never did the Queen any service, nor are you capable of doing her any." He made no reply [that is Harley to the life], but supped with her and Mercurialis [Bolingbroke] that night, at her own house. His revenge is not the less meditated for that. He tells the words clearly and distinctly to all mankind. Those who range under his banner call her ten-thousand bitches and kitchen-wenches.

The sequel follows soon from the same hand:

> It is not the going out, but the manner, that enrages me. The Queen has told all the Lords the reasons of her parting with him, viz. that he neglected all business; that he was seldom to be understood; that when he did explain himself, she could not depend upon the truth of what he said; that he never came to her at the time she appointed; that he often came drunk; that lastly, to crown all, he behaved himself toward her with ill manner, indecency, and disrespect.

An extraordinary indictment, and, apparently, true in every word! How that age of ceremony and decorum had learned to "rail to the pit of

hell"! A lover of the literature of Queen Anne can only add, in the Latin of Swift's correspondent, *pudet hæc opprobria nobis.*

Then, almost on the heels of Lewis's letter, there comes from another political friend the tale of the famous session of the Privy Council through the long day and night while the Queen lay dying, and of the discomfiture of Bolingbroke when she "gave the Treasurer's staff to the Duke of Shrewsbury, my Lord Chancellor holding her hand to direct it to the Duke." The tragic farce is ended — "the Queen is dead." Bolingbroke, the principal victim, showed a brave heart — in words. "The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday," he writes to Swift; "the Queen died on Sunday. What a world is this, and how does Fortune banter us.... I have lost all by the death of the Queen, but my spirit; and I protest to you, I feel that increase upon me." But there is nothing of this pretended serenity in the letters of the rest of the little band of politicians and wits who had been striving to hold back the onsweeping tide of change; for them it was the end of all things. Swift expressed the sentiment of the group when he wrote: "These public misfortunes have altered all my measures, and broke my spirits"; and Arbuthnot summed up the situation in a Virgilian phrase: *Fuimus Troes* (or *Tores*, as it is sometimes quoted).

The peculiarity of this whole event for us to-

day lies in the mingling, intricate beyond the common measure, of national and personal interests. Swift, reflecting later on this period of time and naïvely suggesting to Bolingbroke that he should draw up its story "fully and exactly told," was not deceived in declaring that "there never was a more important one in England than that which made up the four last years of the late Queen." In that momentous session of the Privy Council the old and the new England sat facing each other, and the passing of the staff from the groping hands of the sovereign to Shrewsbury instead of to Bolingbroke was the symbol of a great revolution closed. It marked the end of that high zeal of the imagination which for longer than a century had given to England something more than material empire; it foreboded the quick decline of that intellectual originality which had already caused her to be regarded as the *pays philosophe*, and which, if unchecked, might have kept her as the leader of European thought when the world sadly needed such leadership. With the coming of the Hanoverians loyalty of the imagination to the institutions of church and government left the land, or lurked in secret places, and the prose of opportunism spread over all; England was to gain in practical efficiency, but for a long time she was to sink in the scale by which nations are measured against one another in things of the mind

and spirit. The pity of it is that the visible object of loyalty had been so unworthy, descending at the last to that lonely, dull, well-meaning, but helpless woman who united the blood of the Hydes and the Stuarts; the irony of it is the character of the two men, Harley and St. John, who, by their folly and egotism, made it impossible, in the day of final trial, to distinguish loyalty from faction and literature from pamphleteering. The party leadership of Harley, in particular, belongs to the anomalies of history. He had indeed one principle in common with his clear-headed successor, Walpole, *quieta non movere;* but with him it meant merely an "impotent womanish behaviour," a trick of delaying and dallying when he should have acted, and of "biting and cuffing" when he should have surrendered. He was one of those men, not uncommon, who are regarded as profound because they are empty, and as judicious because they are sluggish. And his Ministry was, as Swift called them, "a set of people drawn almost to the dregs." These were the statesmen who had in their keeping the destiny of the British intellect and imagination.

That is the piquant contradiction of Queen Anne politics; on the minds of those who partook of the movement without being practical politicians, the result was such as might be guessed. For reasons which it is not necessary here to dis-

cuss the literature of England had been for some time tending more and more to forms of cynicism and satire; so much so that "wit" had become almost synonymous with malice, and Grub Street was thought of as the haunt of men banded together against the dignity of mankind and the stability of society. Early in the seventeenth century Sir Henry Savile, the editor of Chrysostom and Provost of Eton, had avowed, if we may believe Aubrey, that "he could not abide *witts:* when a young scholar was recommended to him for a good witt, '*Out upon him, I'le have nothing to doe with him; give me the plodding student. If I would look for witts I would goe to Newgate, there be the witts.*'" By the time of Anne this spirit of opposition had grown to be internecine, to such a degree that the mark of the true wit was his success in excoriating the vermin who had debased the name. "Fools, in my opinion," said Swift to Pope, "are as necessary for a good writer as pen, ink, and paper." Now, this little group of authors, of whom Swift and Pope were the acknowledged chiefs, had, for very tangled motives, let us admit, undertaken to organize the malice of wit in the service of statesmen who, in their opinion, were upholding the great tradition of England as the home of enlightenment; and they had been deceived in their political leader and defeated in their policy. If they had hated fools and Whigs before, they now extended their

animosity to most of mankind. "Sure the earth has not produced such monsters as Mercurialis, and his companion, and the Prelate," was Lewis's splenetic verdict on Bolingbroke and Harcourt and Atterbury. And Arbuthnot, in his letter to Swift on the Queen's death, turns the rage and bewilderment of the beaten faction to philosophy: "I have an opportunity calmly and philosophically to consider that treasure of vileness and baseness, that I always believed to be in the heart of man." All this, he declares, "really diverts me, and in a manner improves my theory." Yet it is an odd sort of diversion: "God knows," he adds, "I write this with tears in my eyes."

It would be interesting to follow this improvement of their theory through the works of the various men affected. Arbuthnot, for example, though he expressed himself at the moment in what are perhaps the bitterest words of any of the group, soon regained the fine equanimity of his spirit. Barely a year after the date of the letter just mentioned, he is writing to Swift, now in Ireland, in a vein as significant of his central calm as of the high esteem in which his absent friend was held:

> Therefore I say again, come, and you will be far from finding such dismal scenes as you describe. Your own letter will furnish you with topics to conquer your melancholy. For in such a mutability, what is it that must not in time cast up? . . . As to your friends, though the

world is changed to them, they are not changed to you; and you will be caressed as much as ever, and by some that bore you no good will formerly. Do you think there is no pleasure in hearing the Hanover club declaim upon the clemency and gentleness of the late reign, and a thousand stranger things? As for the Constitution, it is in no more danger than a strong man that has got a little surfeit by drunkenness. All will be well, and people recover their sober senses every day.

So the general *débâcle* had no power over the disposition of the honest doctor; but in the case of the two great writers of the group, Pope and Swift, if it did not change their attitude towards life, it at least deepened their views, adding a something which raises, or lowers, their conviction into a kind of philosophy. With Pope this conviction came with the enlarged opportunity of associating with Bolingbroke, one of the leaders of the deistic optimism which was running parallel with the cynical movement and was in the end to supplant it. Now the coexistence of these two tendencies, the one drawing on the essential selfishness and baseness of human nature, the other treating evil as a mere accident in the make-up of the world and leading on to the school of sympathetic sentimentalists, was in itself a curious anomaly; it became something more than an anomaly when it showed itself in a single writer. This fundamental inconsistency is not absent in Bolingbroke, though it is manifest there not so much in his avowed philosophy as in

the discrepancy between his books and his character. But in Pope, under Bolingbroke's influence, it becomes flagrant and inexcusable. In the same years, almost in the same breath, he was composing the *Dunciad* and other satires, in which the lash is applied to human nature about as vigorously as genius could wield it, and in his *Essay* was giving epigrammatic form to Bolingbroke's creed of universal goodness. The thought of the little poet thus calling his enemies (that is, all the world save a half-dozen exempts) every scandalous name in his rich vocabulary, while at the same time he was concocting his deistic salve for the conscience of mankind, is not nice. It troubles me in my admiration of Pope — for I am bound to admire his genius, and somehow I cannot help loving the man too — this troubles me, I say, more than all the atrocious intrigues of his vanity.

One plea against the charge of insincerity is, no doubt, possible. The peculiarity of Pope, and to a certain extent of other satirists of the age, is that their spleen was vented at individual men, rather than at human nature in itself. Woe to the particular wretch who in any way came athwart the doughty captain of Twickenham! The luckless miscreant was pilloried in the *Dunciad*, perhaps, or in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, with a label over his head so clever and so diabolically like the truth that it could never be forgotten.

The only comfort for the sufferer was the assurance that his infamy should at least be immortal; and, indeed, more than once we find Swift protesting with Pope against this immortality he was bestowing on his enemies. Now, this very preoccupation with individuals left the door open, in a way, for adopting Bolingbroke's deistic attitude of benevolence when it came to dealing with human nature in general. But the inconsistency, though it might be less startling to the superficial observer, was none the less gross. If the good are the rare exceptions, and the great mass of individual men merit only contempt and insult, by what right, when we come to generalize, shall we adopt a philosophy which applies a kind of universal whitewash to the evil of the world?

Whatever may be said of Swift, there is no such fundamental inconsistency, not to call it insincerity, in his writings; and so far as he contradicts himself at all, it is in the opposite direction to Pope. He, too, has dealt heavy blows to his enemies on occasion, notably to such wicked Whigs as Wharton, but in what may be called his literary pose he consciously and consistently reserves his satire for human nature itself, rarely even alluding to particular men. So, in a letter after the completion of his *Gulliver's Travels* and of Pope's *Odyssey*, he draws by inference a comparison between his own method and Pope's, and

summons his friend to battle with the same sort of weapons:

But since you will now be so much better employed, when you think of the world give it one lash the more at my request. I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is toward individuals: for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one: so with physicians — I will not speak of my own trade — soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years, but do not tell, and so I shall go on till I have done with them. I have got materials toward a treatise, proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale* [the definition much mouthed by Bolingbroke and the deists generally], and to show it would be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy, though not in Timon's manner, the whole building of my Travels is erected; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion.

On this ground the *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, to me the greatest of his poems and very great in its way, rises into a kind of pathetic sublimity. The whole thing is a sermon on a favourite text of the cynic, "Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis, nous trouvons toujours quelque chose, qui nous ne déplait pas":

As Rochefoucault his maxims drew
From nature, I believe them true;
They argue no corrupted mind
In him; the fault is in mankind.

So the text is accepted, but with what exquisite art is it turned to the service of flattery:

> In Pope I cannot read a line,
> But with a sigh I wish it mine;
> When he can in one couplet fix
> More sense than I can do in six;
> It gives me such a jealous fit,
> I cry, "Pox take him and his wit!"
> I grieve to be outdone by Gay
> In my own humorous biting way.
> Arbuthnot is no more my friend,
> Who dares to irony pretend. . . .

And then the other side of the picture. The Dean is dead, and the wits and politicians and courtiers take their cynical advantage of the occasion, each in his own way. But —

> Here shift the scene, to represent
> How those I love my death lament.
> Poor Pope would grieve a month, and Gay
> A week, and Arbuthnot a day.
> St. John himself will scarce forbear
> To bite his pen, and drop a tear.
> The rest will give a shrug, and cry,
> "I'm sorry — but we all must die!"

This heartiness of feeling for his friends is not peculiar to Swift; it was, indeed, characteristic of the group, giving a rare charm and beauty to their correspondence among themselves and to their poetical references to one another; and, in the case of Pope as much as of Swift, this feeling is marvellously enhanced by its very isolation in

a desert of jealousies and enmities — so excellent is hatred as one of the backgrounds of life. But Swift's ironical association of this genuine sentiment of friendship with Rochefoucauld's doctrine of universal egotism is quite different from, let us say, Pope's juxtaposition of the two motives in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.* From this theme Swift passes easily to a statement of his theory of satire corresponding to that which he had expressed in his letter to Pope — but softened now for the public ear:

> Perhaps I may allow the Dean
> Had too much satire in his vein;
> And seem'd determined not to starve it,
> Because no age could more deserve it.
> Yet malice never was his aim;
> He lash'd the vice, but spared the name.
> . . . . . .
> He gave the little wealth he had
> To build a house for fools and mad;
> And show'd by one satiric touch,
> No nation wanted it so much.

Such, then, I take it, is the note of Swift's satire (though we must not construe the absence of personal malice too literally). His method, at least, is logical, even terrible in its logic. If you say that such personal tenderness as he showed for his friends ought to have been precluded by his theory of the universal baseness of mankind, the reply is that all generalizations are subject

to exceptions. And in Swift's case the harshness of the exceptions, logically mitigated by his rule of omitting individuals from his satire, is still further softened by the sophistry, if you choose to call it so, of hiding his love in the cynicism of La Rochefoucauld.

Yet let us grant a certain inconsistency between the man's mind and heart — and be grateful for it. And let us admit frankly that the cause of this broken harmony is a part of the mystery of his being which it is presumptuous to say we understand. We can go no further than to guess at its origin. He was born, one thinks, with a sensitive heart, quickly moved to sympathy by the joys and sorrows of those near him, and at the same time tortured by the pride of a Lucifer; he had a mind easily duped by appearances, yet strong and tenacious in logical deduction. With such a nature he might under other conditions have developed into the humanitarian which one of his recent biographers, with more zeal than knowledge, has actually made him out to be. But events — it is unnecessary to relate them — carried him in a different direction: *rebus aliter visum.* He never lost his tenderness for his friends, and his sympathy for specific cases of distress, whether personal or national, remained with him so long as he kept his faculties. When the rest of Oxford's adherents were turning against him and complaining to one another of his weakness and treach-

ery, Swift alone of that group refrained from incrimination. He was kept faithful in part, one thinks, by sympathy for the man in his fallen estate, and in part also, it may be, by his notable inability to judge individuals. His own failure to rise was due in no small degree to this weakness of judgement, as was shown in the beginning of his career by the instrument he chose as his advocate with King William; and his extraordinary and manifestly sincere laudations of Oxford may be attributed to the same blindness. But if his feelings suffered little change — at least until the final silence and darkness settled over him — his early experience of humiliation and disillusion tended to confine his sympathy to personal relations and to preclude it from entering into his general criticism of life. We should not, then, be surprised to find the boasted malice of the wits used by such a mind with devastating logic. We might almost expect, given the genius, such a work as the *Tale of a Tub*, in which the author's satire, though aimed ostensibly at the absurdities of religious faction, ranges with terrible destruction over the various enthusiasms of mankind, shrivelling with its touch the aspirations of fame, the pretensions of learning, the pride of elevation, the spiritual mysteries of faith, the very hope of escape from degraded misery into calm of soul: "This is the sublime and refined point of felicity, called the possession of being well deceived; the

serene peaceful state, of being a fool among knaves." It is not strange that the reputation of this book should have overshadowed him through life, deterring those in power from placing him in a position of authority over the higher illusions of society.

For such a satirist there remained but one step, and that was taken, I think, when the calamity of 1714 opened the door into the darker cavern, where rage at the delusions of men was to be converted into hatred of humanity itself. From this cavern he wrote to Pope that "the common saying of life being a farce is true in every sense but the most important one, for it is a ridiculous tragedy, which is the worst kind of composition." From there also he sent to the same person his literary profession: "The chief end I propose to myself in all my labours is to vex the world rather than divert it. . . . I hate and detest that animal called man." He changed the name of the animal to Yahoo in his great book.

So the event that carried Pope into the shallows of deistic evasion lifted Swift's cynicism to a perfect philosophy of hatred, and made of him the true logician and master spirit of wit. Yet withal the author of *Gulliver* still kept his human inconsistencies of love. There is nothing, perhaps, in the book quite so sublime, shall we say, or so blasphemous, quite so cynical and so pathetic, as his parody, in the same letter to Pope,

of the words spoken over Sodom and Gomorrah: "Oh! if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my Travels."

I would leave the matter there, were it not that to write an essay, however brief and tentative, on Swift without touching on his attitude towards women would have the appearance of shirking the main problem of his character. Into the secret of his relation with Stella I shall not attempt to pry beyond the limits of safe conjecture. The story that they were both the natural children of Sir William Temple I reject as too wild for credence. Of the hypothesis of impotence it seems to me that a candid reading of Swift's works and correspondence, with a slight knowledge of the world, ought to make short shrift. Whether the marriage ever took place is still problematical; the external evidence for it is pretty strong, the internal evidence appears to me to weigh against it, and I am rather inclined to form my opinion in this case upon the latter. Further than this, if there be any clue to the abnormal course of his love, it is to be found, I suspect, in the fact that, whereas his cynicism and tenderness for men were kept separate by experience and understanding, with women they were combined into one feeling of strange and fateful power. Here his very cynicism is tender, and his tenderness is cynical. He could have written of no man those inscrutable words, "Only

a woman's hair"; and the critic is audacious or ignorant who would attempt to analyse the complexity of their meaning. But one can see dimly that such a feeling, while saving him from common debauchery, would strike true love with a palsy of hesitation. It brought awful repentance to him after the woman's death; how it affected her in life we shall never know.

Another woman, who rebelled against this mystery, and broke her heart in doing so, made this confession in one of her letters to him: "Could I know your thoughts, which no human creature is capable of guessing at, because never any one living thought like you. . . . Sometimes you strike me with that prodigious awe, I tremble with fear; at other times a charming compassion shines through your countenance, which revives my soul." — That is about as close as one can get to the great Dean of Dublin after reading the six volumes of his Correspondence.

POPE

POPE

AFTER all this, it is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, whether Pope was a poet, otherwise than by asking in return, If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found? To circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer, though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily be made.

When Dr. Johnson handed down that famous decision he had no means of foreseeing, and indeed would not have cared to see, the great romantic revival which was to ask a good many times whether Pope was a poet, and was to circumscribe poetry with innumerable definitions. Even so cautious and classical a critic as Matthew Arnold was reduced by his Wordsworthian fervour into saying that, "though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose." Probably the majority of readers of verse to-day, certainly the lagging "official critics," still talk of Pope in an offhand way as a great writer, perhaps, but as at bottom scarcely a poet at all. Yet there are signs that the sounder taste of the present, grown a little weary of the old romantic presumptions, bor-

rowed from Germany, is tending rather to a truer estimate of the neo-classic school. A pleasant witness of this returning sanity may be found in the new life of Pope [1] by Miss Symonds, whose measured judgement shows by its very lack of originality — I mean nothing disparaging by the phrase — the new set of the tide. In the end criticism is likely to settle down on the sentence of Joseph Warton, himself one of the forerunners of romanticism: "In that species of poetry wherein Pope excelled, he is superior to all mankind; and I only say that this species of poetry is not the most excellent one of the art."

No doubt the character of the poet and the indecorous squabbles in which his life was passed have had something to do with the critical obloquy that has occasionally fallen upon him. If you wish to hear the worst of him — and it is pretty bad — you have only to read Professor Lounsbury's learned work, in which the quarrel between Pope and Theobald over the *Text of Shakespeare* is made the excuse for raking together half the scandalous doings of the little bard. Professor Lounsbury, as an eminent and honest scholar, may show just a touch of partiality for the able editor and poor poet against the slovenly editor and great poet, but, with the best of allowances,

[1] *Mr. Pope: His Life and Times.* By George Paston [Miss E. M. Symonds]. Two volumes. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1909.

his exposition of Pope's treacheries and endless machinations leaves the would-be moralist a sorry figure to contemplate. Well, let us admit that in stooping to Truth, as he boasted, Pope showed rather a magnificent contempt for the prosaic precepts of that goddess. As a claimant on eternity he was ready to treat the periods of passing time most cavalierly, antedating and postdating his satirical thrusts quite as it suited him. His success in getting his correspondence published against his will is perhaps the finest piece of double-dealing recorded in the annals of literature. His ways with women were peevish or bullying as occasion demanded, and his gallantries are with difficulty separated from his slanders. All this can be admitted, yet much is left to be said on the other side. Wit was a recognized warfare in those days, and the honours went too often to the ablest and not to the most honourable; but the reverse is also true that dishonour has now overtaken Pope, not because he was more treacherous than his rivals, but because he was cleverer — time is likely to take this revenge on a man for lying too successfully. Nor was Pope altogether without a sense of rectitude in the warfare of wit. In an age of pensions and time-serving, he remained true to a losing religious and political creed. If, as seems probable, he for some reason accepted a thousand pounds from the Duchess of Marlborough, and then left for publication after

his death a satire which he must have known would be applied to that lady, against the discredit of such a stroke must be balanced the fact that he refused to insert a flattering mention of Alderman Barber in his verse at the price of four or five thousand pounds. As the world goes, I count the credit here above the debit. And at any rate the dæmonic Duchess, if she read the lines and paid for their suppression, thereby acknowledged the strength of the satire, or, if she could have seen them only after her own slanderous *Characters* were posthumously printed, would have vailed to one who fought with her own weapons, and more dexterously, in the duel of politics and wit:

> But what are these to great Atossa's mind?
> Scarce once herself, by turns all womankind!
> Who, with herself, or others, from her birth
> Finds all her life one warfare upon earth:
> Shines in exposing knaves, and painting fools,
> Yet is whate'er she hates and ridicules. . . .

Outside of that warfare Pope had his admirable traits. His filial piety was scarcely less beautiful because he made poetical capital of it. His friendship, barring the grievous and deplorable feud with Addison, was with his real rivals to fame; and the correspondence of these men, though its frank moralizing may sometimes offend an age grown dull to the distinction between reflection and affectation, is one of the great documents of human nature. When Pope lay "dying of a hun-

dred good symptoms," he said to the priest, after taking the last sacraments: "There is nothing that is meritorious but virtue and friendship, and indeed friendship itself is only a part of virtue." It was indeed so accounted to him. Warburton, possibly as much to affront the world as to elevate Pope, called him "one of the noblest works of God, . . . an honest man." And Spence, in his anecdotes of Pope's last moments and of Bolingbroke's tenderness, raises their friendship into something almost as beautiful as the faith that gave sanctity to the death-bed scenes of the previous century. No rearrangement can better the seeming disorder of Spence's memoranda:

There is so much trouble in coming into the world, and so much uneasiness in going out of it, that — it is hardly worth while to be here at all! — *The same.*[1] [His Lordship's melancholy attitude that morning (the 21st), leaning against Mr. Pope's chair, and crying over him for a considerable time with more concern than can be expressed.]

Ah! great God, what is man? — *The same.* [Looking on Mr. Pope, and repeating it several times, interrupted with sobs.]

When I was telling his Lordship that Mr. Pope, on every catching and recovering of his mind, was always saying something kindly either of his present or absent friends, and that this in some cases was so surprising, that it seemed to me as if his humanity had outlived his understanding, Lord Bolingbroke said, "it has so!" and

[1] The phrase, "*The same*" indicates that the words are Lord Bolingbroke's.

then added, "I never in my life knew a man that had so tender a heart for his particular friends, or a more general friendship for mankind."

I have known him these thirty years, and value myself more for that man's love and friendship, than —— (sinking his head, and losing his voice in tears.) — *The same.*

It is well to keep this picture in mind when we read of the dark ways of Pope's wit. When all is said we come back to the estimate of Chesterfield, who knew mankind both in general and in particular better than most others of his age. "Pope," he declared, "was as great an instance as any he quotes of the contrarieties and inconsistencies of human nature; for notwithstanding the malignity of his satires, and some blamable passages in his life, he was charitable to his power, active in doing good offices, and piously attentive to an old bedridden mother."

I suspect that Pope's detractors for the most part would be indifferent enough to the blamable passages of his life — for it needs a rare literary detective to trace his winding course — were it not that his greatest poems have become to them what Johnson called one of his letters, "nothing but tedious malignity." The problem to-day is not so much to rehabilitate Pope's personal character — a dubious task — as to explain why his very greatness as a poet has aroused so much resentment; and the first step to this end is to make

clear to ourselves wherein his greatness really lies. There are, of course, aspects of his work which ought to appeal to all lovers of verse without distinction, and which need no defence. Mr. Courthope, for instance, has made a strong case for the variety and beauty of the heroic measure in his hands; and it is certainly a dull taste that will not respond to the sweet felicity of that couplet in the *Rape of the Lock:*

> The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
> From the fair head — for ever and for ever;

or that will not feel the passion of Eloisa's solitary cry:

> Shrines! where their vigils pale-eyed virgins keep,
> And pitying saints, whose statues learn to weep!
> Though cold like you, unmoved and silent grown,
> I have not yet forgot myself to stone;

or admire the justness of that simile of the scholar's progress, which Dr. Johnson thought "perhaps the best that English poetry can show":

> So pleased at first the towering Alps we try,
> Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
> The eternal snows appear already passed,
> And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
> But, those attain'd, we tremble to survey
> The growing labours of the lengthen'd way,
> The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
> Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

But dexterously wrought as such gems may be, we shall have a feeble case for Pope if we rest his

claims on work in this *genre;* magnificent as it is, it lacks the glamour, the last touch of magic, which even the little poets of another school could command in isolated passages. You will read through the meanderings of William Chamberlain's *Pharonnida*, lost in a tedious wonder at its aimless involutions, when suddenly you will be arrested by a far vista like this:

> Farewell, Florenza! when both time and place
> My separated soul hath left, to be
> *A stranger masked in immortality,*
> Think on thy murthered friend.

You will say that these outlooks into the skies were closed when Pope began to reign. Or you will pause in the elegies of Katherine Philips at such a couplet as this:

> A chosen privacy, a cheap content,
> And all the peace a friendship ever lent.

Pope wrote much, and well, of friendship, but just that note of contented unworldliness he never quite felt, or never sang. In the same way Pope has many brilliant descriptions of nature, but a single line of Thomas Tickell (his contemporary, whose translation of the first book of the *Iliad*, under Addison's care, was the source of a veritable Iliad of woes) will stir a chord of human sentiment that the poet of *Windsor Forest* could never touch:

> Brown fields their fallow sabbaths keep.

By his very supremacy as master of the new school Pope lost what Chamberlain calls

> the fantastic clew
> To a delight, which doth in labyrinths sit,
> None e'er beheld while they preserved their wit.

No one, I think, would be so narrow-minded as to rank Chamberlain or Katherine Philips or Thomas Tickell above Pope, yet to reach a fair estimate of Pope's greatness we must begin by admitting that even in these minor writers there is an occasional glimpse of divine mysteries of whose existence Pope seems not even to have dreamed. If this were all there could be no gainsaying those who deny him the title of poet altogether. But it is by no means all, and there are other large fields of the imagination which the romantic poets closed to us. Pope, as a matter of fact, has been dethroned as much for his great positive qualities as for his deficiencies. Admirers of Pope, therefore, are likely to feel a touch of impatience at the extravagant praise so often bestowed upon *The Rape of the Lock*, as if his consummate success in this filagree of the mock-heroic should be held up as an excuse for his failure in the more serious style. There is only one honest way to deal with him; we must treat him squarely as the poet of satire, and, unfortunately for his fame, the world has come to regard satire as scarcely poetry at all. If it is not poetry, then, indeed, Pope was but the

fragment of a poet. There are, of course, special reasons why such a satire as the *Dunciad*, which by reason of its size and scope comes first to mind, should find few and painful readers. All great poems, even those most universal in their human appeal, require a fairly high-developed historic sense for their appreciation, and it is idle to suppose that the *Æneid* will mean much to those who have not trained themselves to live in the Latin world, or that *Paradise Lost* can ever be interesting except to the scholar. No long poem of the past is really popular; but the *Dunciad* demands for its comprehension an altogether exorbitant acquaintance with men and manners of a brief particular period. Thus, at the beginning of the second book, the hero is raised to his proud eminence of dulness:

> High on a gorgeous seat, that far outshone
> Henley's gilt tub, or Flecknoe's Irish throne,
> Or that where on her Curlls the public pours
> All-bounteous, fragrant grains and golden showers,
> Great Cibber sate.

It is excellent satire and parody combined, but without footnotes the allusions will fall pointless to all save those who are deep in the recondite frivolities of the age.

And even after the necessary minute knowledge has been acquired — and to the scholar this local habitation and name of the *Dunciad* may have a special though somewhat artificial attrac-

tion — there remains the fact that the current of historic sympathy has set strongly away from Pope, and that most of us in our hearts are stung by his ridicule as were his living enemies. For that battle of the wits was no causeless or merely bookish event, but was part of the great political war of the land. It grew inevitably out of the ruinous divisions, as it echoed the drums and tramplings, of the previous century; and if ink now flowed instead of blood, the contest was hardly the less venomous for that, or the consequences less serious. It all goes back to that terrible mischance which in the days of the Stuarts divided the imagination and the practical sense of England into irreconcilable camps, and separated the loyalty to symbols of authority so far from the actualities of force. That separation kept its character through the following century, if it has not continued down to this day. Bolingbroke's vision of the Patriot King was a reassumption of the faith of the Cavaliers, and as it was a product of the imagination divorced of practical sense, we see its working out in the follies of George III and the loss of an empire. Walpole's policy was essentially a continuation of the empire of Cromwell, and as it failed to make a place for the imagination in its practice, we see the result in the gradual lowering of England's ideal life. At the beginning of the eighteenth century England was the intellectual leader of Europe; at the end she followed

at a distance. I know of no more distressing fact in her history than the situation which, at the critical moment of 1714, set almost all the notable men of letters on the losing side — all of them, I should say, with the exception of Addison and Steele, for Defoe at least served Harley and fell with him. Consider the consequences to literature of the coming of the Hanoverians: Harley himself imprisoned and tried for his head; Bolingbroke frightened out of the country; Atterbury exiled; Swift confined to Dublin; Parnell also kept in Ireland; Pope cut off from political life and retired to Twickenham; Gay nursing the insult of an offer to be gentleman-usher to the infant Princess Louisa; Prior imprisoned for two years, and then sinking to a frowsy degradation; Arbuthnot removed from St. James's, and at the end writing to Pope his pathetic plea for euthanasia. It was with no mere poetic licence that Pope painted the new sovereignty:

> She mounts the throne: her head a cloud conceal'd,
> In broad effulgence all below reveal'd
> ('T is thus aspiring Dulness ever shines);
> Soft on her lap her Laureate son reclines.
> Beneath her footstool Science groans in chains,
> *And Wit dreads exile, penalties, and pains.*

There is personal spite aplenty in the *Dunciad*, innumerable strokes of vicious retaliation and wanton offence — these faults cannot be severed from the character of the author; but be-

neath these motives of personal satire we shall miss the whole meaning of the poem if we fail to see the passionate warfare of the losing party of wit against the triumphant party of practical common-sense. Picture to yourself one of the dinners at Lord Oxford's, the guests that met there and what they stood for, or call up one of the more intimate companies in the apartments of that great talker and gourmand, Dr. Arbuthnot, at St. James's, and in comparison with these think of what passed in the palace of George I and his son, or even in the chambers of Caroline, and what these things meant to letters. There is no doubt much to admire in the society that Caroline affected, and an evening at St. James's, when the Queen and perhaps Mrs. Clayton drew out the conversation of Berkeley or Clarke or Butler is one of the things I like best to contemplate in those days, even though, as Chesterfield and Horace Walpole unite in saying, the mistress of the palace only bewildered herself in metaphysical disputes which she did not comprehend. But the master of the palace, like his own master, Sir Robert, had, I know, "a contempt for *Belles Lettres*, which he called trifling," and the Queen herself, I remember, in place of the poets she frowned upon or neglected, showered her favours upon the sad thresher-poet, Stephen Duck, whom she made librarian of her grotto, "Merlin's Cave," in Richmond Gardens. George called the grotto

"silly stuff"; what he thought of the poor favourite who was patronized to suicide, I do not know. In the contrast of Queen Anne's reign with that of the Hanoverians lies the real meaning of the *Dunciad*, and therein is the excuse for its bitterness. The pity of it is that politically, at least as we contemplate affairs within a narrow range of years, the Hanoverians were right, and as they seem to us right, we are drawn away from sympathy, even of a literary sort, with the satire that exposed the intellectual bareness of the land.

But there is still a deeper cause of our distaste than the old echoes of faction and our political incompatibility. A great change has come upon us in our attitude towards human nature itself, and, curiously enough, Pope himself is one of the prime movers of this revolution which has carried us away from the very comprehension of his own principal works. For there is this strange paradox in the philosophy of Pope. On the one hand, we have his contemptuous treatment of mankind, as if his satires were no more than a long development of the text of Machiavelli that "all men are caitive [*cattivi*, captive to the base impulses of egotism], and are ever ready to use the malignity of their spirit, when they have free opportunity." On the other hand, in his *Essay on Man*, inspired by the dubious optimism of his friend Bolingbroke, we have the deistic conception of the world as the best possible creation and of men

as naturally altruistic in desire and as needing only liberty from restraint to develop into unselfishness of action:

> All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou can'st not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good:
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

And deism, which, be it noted, was the express theme of the philosophers and divines who hung upon the court of Caroline, won the day, altering our whole conception of society and our manner of judging the individual. We have in the course of the last two hundred years acquired a kind of tenderness for humanity, which causes us to shrink from the old theological notion of absolute evil in the world, and also from the literature of the moralists which was based on the same belief. With this tenderness, if it be not the source of the feeling, our individual sensitiveness has increased enormously, so that we take in a quite personal way the attacks of moralist and satirist on mankind in general. We can listen to the singing of the still sad music of humanity with a delicate self-pity, but from the philosophy of a Rochefoucauld or a Machiavelli we start back as if a hand were laid on a concealed sore. It is certainly true that he who has imbibed deeply this modern humanitarianism with its fashion of mu-

tual flattery, will be repelled from the literature of which Pope's satires are so perfect an example; in those attacks on the meanness and folly and dulness and venality of the world he will suffer a kind of uneasiness, and, taking his revenge by decrying them as a base form of art, will turn for consolation to what Cowper calls the

> charity that soothes a lie,
> And thrusts the truth with scorn and anger by.

I would not say that Machiavelli expressed the whole truth, any more than did the deists, but it may as well be recognized that, without some lingering suspicion of the eternal deceitfulness of the heart and some malicious glee in the unveiling of the deceit, no man shall feel at home in the old battle of the wits. Only the absence of that suspicion and glee can account, I think, for the common apathy towards Pope's masterpiece, the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, which is at once the prologue and the consummation of his satires.

For myself I will admit frankly that I have read the *Epistle* oftener, perhaps, than any other English poem except *Lycidas*, and that long familiarity with its lines has given me always a deepening admiration for its art. If it is not poetry, I do not know where poetry is to be found. That Pope's inspiration moves on a lower plane than Milton's — though his art is as flawless — I should be the

last to deny. Yet in a way their themes, despite the great difference of their age and faith, have unexpected points of contact. Milton, like the poet of Queen Anne, wrote in the heat of battle, and with him, too, *fecit indignatio versus*. He was moved by a sublime rage against those who, as he believed, were degrading the Church and fattening on her spiritual poverty, against the blind mouths who, for their bellies' sake, were creeping into the fold, and against their lean and flashy songs. In contrast to this contagion he draws in a picture the true beauty and peace of the shepherd's trade, and the sweet companionship of those who walk therein, singing together their eager Doric lays, as it were an image and foretaste of the heavenly societies and of the unexpressive nuptial song.

The gap from Milton's theme to Pope's may seem complete, yet in reality one is the true successor of the other, and nothing can better show the mischievous confusion resulting from the division in the Stuart days than the fact that the practical party which Milton represented—so far as he can be said to have represented anybody but himself — was now the people of Dulness, while the party of the imagination, as we see it in the writings of Swift and Pope, was divested of all the magnificences of morality. Yet if the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* lacks Milton's mighty impulse of religion and draws from lower springs

of Helicon, it still has its great compensations. The indignation is as terrible, if its causes are more mixed. Here, even more ruinously than in the *Dunciad*, and without the longer poem's tediousness of obscure detail, the dreaded secret is revealed —

> That secret to each fool, that he's an ass.

We may doubt what was the exact nature of that two-handed engine which Milton suspended against the enemies of Puritanism, but there is nothing ambiguous about the revenge of Pope, whether with one blade he hews down his open enemies or with the other attacks his pretended friends. From the opening appeal to the poet's old and faithful servant:

> Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigued I said;
> Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.
> The Dog-star rages! nay, 't is past a doubt,
> All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:
> Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,
> They rave, recite, and madden round the land —

to the last fling at the hypocrites:

> One from all Grub-street will my fame defend,
> And, more abusive, calls himself my friend —

there is a succession of lines of almost dazzling wit, and every line a stab. Thackeray, as the father of Pendennis and the half-ironical patron of the Grub Street of his own day, has some pretty

words of abuse upon Pope for fixing in the public mind this notion of the snarling, starving attic-world of authorship. No doubt Pope has touched up the picture with high lights, but an acquaintance with the lesser literature of the day, and with the periodicals, not omitting Pope's own blackguardly *Grub Street Journal*, gives all the justification needed for the portrait. And here again we shall miss the point if we take this fury as purely personal. There were principles involved, though Pope himself, I dare say, never really knew the difference between his principles and his spite. Something more than personal hatred envenoms the deadly caricature of Lord Hervey and the desire to "flap this bug with gilded wings." With the culmination of the satire,

> Or at the ear of Eve, familiar toad,

should be read Jonathan Richardson's comment:

> I have heard that this lord had actually a seat managed behind the queen's hunting chaise, where he sat perched behind her close at her ear, but he could never stand it above three or four times. Besides the ridicule of his friends, folks hooted at him as the machine passed along.

The real animus of the attack is the relation of Hervey to Caroline and the Hanoverian court, and all that this meant to the intellectual and imaginative life of England. This, too, must be the palliation for the portrait of Addison, though

it may scarcely excuse the author's shiftiness in regard to the date of writing and publishing the lines. They must be quoted:

> Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
> True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
> Blest with each talent, and each art to please,
> And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
> View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
> And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
> Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
> A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend;
> Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
> And so obliging, that he ne'er obliged;
> Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
> And sit attentive to his own applause;
> While wits and Templars every sentence raise,
> And wonder with a foolish face of praise —
> Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he!

Of the exquisite finish of these verses there can, I suppose, be no question, unless De Quincey's frivolous criticism is to be listened to. The other day, while they were fresh in my memory, a friend of mine who loves and gathers beautiful things was showing me his collection of Japanese sword-guards; and as I looked at those wonderfully

wrought plates of steel and considered their ancient place on the instruments of battle, it occurred to me that their craftsmanship was not unlike that which had gone into the making of this detached masterpiece of words. And it seemed to me that the rectitude and patience of the work in each case was one of the causes of their perpetual charm. I have a prejudice in favour of genius, an invincible feeling that true art is in some way based on truth. And so, whether this portrait of Addison was written, as Warburton declares, in 1715, because the Earl of Warwick, Addison's stepson, had warned Pope of Addison's jealousy and of his instigation of Gildon to publish a scurrilous pamphlet against his supposed friend, or because Pope believed Addison to be responsible for Tickell's rival translation of the *Iliad*, whatever may have been the devious ways of Pope in explaining and spreading abroad the satire — I am convinced that the portrait was not entirely without similitude. In some way the jealousies of Addison's trade had set free the deceitful spirit of egotism that hides beneath the fairest character. It must be remembered also that in the year when the satire was written, and when the circle of Pope was suffering in so many ways from the death of Queen Anne, Addison, as Chief Secretary to Ireland, was enjoying the fruits of his service to the Whigs. He was, I believe, the only man of great parts in pure literature who profited by

the new régime. That, indeed, may be to his credit politically; it will help to explain, nevertheless, why Pope placed him, not among the dunces, for that would have been to stultify the writer, but among those who in the desperate battle of the mind followed the false standard — the one lost leader, when so many lesser and more ignoble men were faithful. I think Pope had loved, and did always admire, Addison. There is the true pathos of wit — and wit may have its tears — a cry of grief from a very great bitterness and regret in the last line,

> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he!

If the emotion here be not genuine, we may as well shut our bosoms to every appeal of books.

But there is in this satire something besides sorrow for the perversion, or at least the failure, of a noble friend; it must be read in connection with Pope's own feeling of weariness, if not of degradation. By the side of this scorn of the dull and the base, runs the contrasted note of friendship, which was always the finest trait of his character. Nowhere else does he express the union that bound together this body of defeated wits with so fine a charm as in the lines to the genial, much-beloved physician:

> Friend to my life, which did not you prolong,
> The world had wanted many an idle song.

In comparison with that peaceful bond, of what profit was the long-protracted and in the end losing enmity which inspired his satire? What evil genius projected him into this hateful air of conflict? —

> Why did I write? What sin to me unknown
> Dipp'd me in ink, my parents' or my own?

To understand the *Epistle* we must read it as Pope's *apologia pro vita sua*, at once an excuse for the warfare in which his days had passed and an acknowledgement of their waste and bitter fruit. With a kind of childlike and, I think, utterly sincere regret he compares the quiet tenor of his father's life with the discordant ambitions of literature, and counts as the one indisputable blessing to himself the homely respect for that life which he had preserved against all the inroads of the world's malice:

> O friend! May each domestic bliss be thine!
> Be no unpleasing melancholy mine:
> Me, let the tender office long engage,
> To rock the cradle of reposing age,
> With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
> Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death,
> Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
> And keep awhile one parent from the sky!
> On cares like these if length of days attend,
> May Heaven, to bless those days, preserve my friend,
> Preserve him social, cheerful, and serene,
> And just as rich as when he served a queen.

Not Goldsmith himself painted a sweeter picture of resignation and piety; and, whatever else may have been true of Pope, these lines also speak the truth of him.

It may seem that the beauty of these contrasted notes in Pope's greatest poem is lost to the world to-day, because one of them at least, the warfare of the wits, was a temporary thing, now long forgotten and of interest only to the special student. To a certain degree and in the matter of form, this is no doubt the case. Yet the warfare substantially is not ended, and shall not end while the differences of human nature remain unreconciled. Men in this living age, always a few, are still fighting for the rights of the mind against a dull and delusive materialism, for the freedom of the imagination against a prosaic tyranny, for a pure and patient ambition against the quick successes of vanity and pliant cleverness, for the reality of human nature against a fatuous self-complacency. To these the triumphant satire of Pope is a perpetual encouragement, while his pathetic apology expresses for them the relief needed when success appears far away, or, even if near, not worth the cost in the humiliating wager of soul against soul. Nor is the theme of the *Epistle* without its more universal aspect. For after all life itself, not for the wit only, but for each man in his place, is a contest, and poetry, from the time when Homer portrayed his

heroes battling with sword and fire on the banks of the Simois, and longing for the peace of hearth and kindred and friends across the seas, has been the expression, varying in form and instruments, of that inevitable fate. The presentation of this truth may in Pope be narrowed to a particular manner and time, it may assume ignoble images and speak too often in reprehensible language, nevertheless he who does not respond to the deep emotion and humanity underlying the *Satires* has travelled but a short way into the realm of letters; he has even, I dare assert, felt but a little of the great realities of man's life.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

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THE LETTERS of Lady Mary, as edited by Mr. W. Moy Thomas, with the editor's Memoir, and the Introductory Notes of her granddaughter, Lady Louisa Stuart, had, I confess, never been able to dispel the impression of that female wit left by the two satirists, who in succession link the whole eighteenth century together with a chain of glittering scandal. So much is there omitted from her correspondence, so much of the panegyric must be taken on credit, that in the end memory still reads under the portrait Pope's "Furious Sappho" and Walpole's "Moll Worthless."

Unfortunately, it cannot be said that the new work [1] by Miss E. M. Symonds ("George Paston") clears up the real obscurity of her career, for at the very critical point of the story the documents are still in part missing and in part withheld. But it does add a good deal to our knowledge of another period, and so far serves strongly to justify the wife — at the expense of the husband. I say period, for Lady Mary's life, more than is commonly the case, was sharply marked off by circumstances. There are at the beginning

[1] *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Her Times.* By George Paston. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1907.

the years of her courtship and early married experience; these are followed by the long journey through Europe and the residence in Turkey; then, for the third period, we find her again in Great Britain, now a confessed belle and wit, one of the leaders of the notorious circle of Twickenham; and, last, comes the lonely exile in Italy and France, with the final journey home to arrange her affairs and to die.

Now, for one of these periods, the first, Miss Symonds has a mass of new and really enlightening material. By the kindness of the Earl of Harrowby she was permitted to examine the Wortley-Montagu manuscripts at Sandon Hall, where she found a hundred and more unpublished letters from Lady Mary, with some fifty or sixty written by Mr. Wortley; and it is no exaggeration to say that the portions of these printed in the present memoir give us the clue to one of the most extraordinary tales of courtship and elopement ever enacted.

Mary Pierrepont was born in London, in 1689, her father being the great-grandson of the first Earl of Kingston and himself afterwards the fifth earl. Her infancy she passed with her grandmother, but from her eighth year, her mother and grandmother being both dead, she grew up without any proper feminine oversight. Her father, she says in an autobiographical fragment, "though naturally an honest man, was

abandoned to his pleasures, and (like most of those of his quality) did not think himself obliged to be very attentive to his children's education." But he was at least proud of his little daughter, and one of his acts shows her in a situation so picturesque in itself and so significant, that it cannot be omitted here, however familiar it may be from repetition. Lady Louisa Stuart tells the story:

As a leader of the fashionable world, and a strenuous Whig in party, he of course belonged to the Kit-Cat Club. One day, at a meeting to choose toasts for the year, a whim seized him to nominate her, then not eight years old, a candidate; alleging that she was far prettier than any lady on their list. The other members demurred, because the rules of the club forbade them to elect a beauty whom they had never seen. "Then you shall see her," cried he; and in the gaiety of the moment sent orders home to have her finely dressed and brought to him at the tavern, where she was received with acclamations, her claim unanimously allowed, her health drunk by every one present, and her name engraved in due form upon a drinking-glass. The company consisting of some of the most eminent men in England, she went from the lap of one poet, or patriot, or statesman, to the arms of another, was feasted with sweetmeats, overwhelmed with caresses, and, what perhaps already pleased her better than either, heard her wit and beauty loudly extolled on every side. Pleasure, she said, was too poor a word to express her sensations; they amounted to ecstasy; never again, throughout her whole future life, did she pass so happy a day.

Poor little lady! it seems that even in child-

hood she was to be the victim of her wit and beauty; she little recked how ruthlessly in later life men were to deal with these lauded gifts. But there was an extraordinary trial of patience and submission for her to undergo before she came to the real battle of life. Among her girl friends in London were Anne and Katherine Wortley Montagu, at whose home she became acquainted with that small wit and unconscionable prig, Edward Wortley Montagu, the friend of Addison and Steele, the "Gripus" and "Avidien" of Pope.

The story of their chance meeting in the apartment of his sister, and their sudden drawing together is told by their granddaughter. On entering into conversation with her he "found, in addition to beauty that charmed him, not only brilliant wit, but a thinking and cultivated mind." It came out that, though a good Latin scholar, she had never read Quintus Curtius (she was only nineteen), and this opened the way to a bit of pedantic gallantry. In a few days he sent her a superb edition of the author, with this inscription:

> Beauty like this had vanquish'd Persia shown,
> The Macedon had laid his empire down,
> And polish'd Greece obey'd a barb'rous throne.
> Had wit so great adorn'd a Grecian dame,
> The am'rous youth had lost his thirst of fame,
> Nor distant Indus sought through Syria's plain;
> But to the Muses' stream with her had run,
> And thought her lover more than Ammon's son.

The beginning was ardent enough, whatever the end was to be. And if the "am'rous youth" was no great writer himself (though this epigram is certainly well turned), his name could link hers with most of the living literary currents. To any one acquainted with the annals of the age the word Montagu awakens a host of recollections. Edward's mother, Anne Wortley, was a notable heiress, and he commonly went by her name as Mr. Wortley. His father was the son of the great first Earl of Sandwich, the patron of Pepys. One of his cousins was Charles Montagu, first Earl of Halifax (2d creation), Pope's "full-blown Bufo, puffed by every quill," the friend of Newton, the patron of Addison, Congreve, and Prior, relative and, at one time, rival in love of Shaftesbury who connected himself more intimately with the family by marriage. Then there was George Montagu, the friend of Walpole, and I know not how many other Montagus in the Correspondence, including George Montagu-Dunk, second Earl of Halifax, the "Great Cu of Haliculeo." On another side, through Edward Montagu, first cousin once removed of Edward Wortley, and husband of the Queen of the bluestockings, we are brought into touch with what may be called the feminine line of eighteenth-century literature: Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Boscawen, Hannah More, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Delany, Fanny Burney, with their male partisans, Lord Lyttelton, Shen-

stone, a whole family of "later Pepyses," even Dr. Johnson himself — I pick the names at random. Not all of these were known personally to Lady Mary or to her husband, but there is a certain significance in noting how the associations of the name reach backward and forward through two centuries. By birth and marriage she belonged to the wits.

But the marriage was not yet. When, in 1709, she went to Thoresby in the country she must of course exchange letters with her dear Anne Montagu at Wharncliffe some thirty miles away, and what more natural than that the brother should take a hand in the correspondence? At first he merely directs his sister, speaking of himself in the third person; but he becomes more and more in evidence, and after the death of Anne, in that same year, we find him writing to Lady Mary as a professed but secret lover. He did, indeed, approach her father for her hand, and was at first favoured. But an obstinate quarrel soon arose over the settlements. Mr. Wortley, who showed early the penurious traits that afterwards grew to a vice, refused to settle property on an unborn heir who might — as indeed he proved in the sequence to do — turn out a spendthrift and wanton; while Lady Mary's father would not risk seeing his grandchildren left beggars. Pin-money and jointures also came in to embitter the wrangle. Mr. Wortley's arguments on that topic may

be read in one of the *Tatler* papers, worked up by Steele from his notes, and the whole ignoble dispute furnished Richardson with material for the episode of Sir Thomas Grandison and his daughter Caroline.

The twists and turns of the correspondence that followed between the young man and the young woman, the clandestine meetings at the house of Richard Steele and elsewhere, the secret messengers, the bribery of servants, the evasions and hesitations, the romantic elopement in the end — all these may be read in the letters quoted by Miss Symonds; a tale not easily matched in the tortuous-wooing fiction of the age. In the end Lady Mary comes out far better than her swain; it is clear that she fell heartily in love with her incomprehensible suitor, and endured his bickerings and insulting insinuations despite the protests of reason and pride. She has her maidenly reserves in language, and at times she can argue with canny prudence; but on the whole one gets from her letters the impression of a troubled common-sense and of a natural girlishness playing the rôle of wisdom.

Mr. Wortley is simply an insufferable egoist; it is not easy to use language too strong for his ignoble jealousies. He has been compared, not inaptly, with Sir Willoughby Patterne — a very stodgy and mercenary Sir Willoughby, one must add — and Lady Mary in these early years might

be likened not unfairly to Clara Middleton. Mr. Wortley's game is simply to draw out the lady's unshamed confession of love without compromising his own calculating reserve, and to subdue her to complete absorption in himself without surrendering any of his own precious independence. It is, in the second part at least, a well recognized masculine sport, but you resent the spectacle when the fairest and wittiest woman in England is the victim, and you are not unprepared to pardon if in due time she gets her revenge.

Early in this courtship he writes:

> Some men have parted with their fortunes to gain women, others have died with despair for loss of 'em, but such Passions have always been raised by a strong belief of a return. The least proof of your being partial to me would, I am sure, have put me wholly in your power, for I only hope I am not. I would give a good deal to be satisfied I am not, tho' the greatest mark of distinction you have shown me is your allowing a treaty, which amounts to no more than this, that you may think my faults as supportable as those of other pretenders that have the same fortune, which cannot be very numerous. . . . Should you write to me it would not be a greater compliment. Every woman would write instead of dressing for any lover she had not resolved to strike out of her list, that could persuade herself she did it half so well as you. I know that when you write you shine out in all your beauty.

Could language be more insulting to a girl who was ready to break all the conventions of society

for a man? No wonder she cries out bitterly: "But you would have me say I am violently in love; that is, finding you think better of me than you desire, you would have me give you a just cause to contemn me." And then, when he takes revenge in a sulky silence, she calls to him, all in a quiver: "I am torn with a variety of imaginations, and not one pleasing one. I conjure you to write, I beg it of you, and promise to tease you no longer upon the least intimation of being troublesome. 'T is impossible to express the pain I am in, when I neither know whether you received my letter, or into whose hands it may fall."

This intriguing despotism might be dismissed with calling the gentleman a cad, or a "puppy," to take the word of his own day, but you cannot help asking all the while what it is that so keeps his suspicions and jealousies on edge. Granted the initial wrong of deceiving her father, the language and acts of Lady Mary were, so far as they appear, without reproach. At first his complaints are inexplicable, and then, as you read, a certain note comes up so frequently that you begin to discern a reason which, if it does not excuse, yet throws some light on his uneasiness. "Could any woman," he says, "write with so much wit, and be so much upon her guard, with one she was afraid of losing?" And again, "I beg you will this once try to avoid being witty and to write in a style of business, tho' it should appear to you as

flat as mine." And still more frankly, "Shall I tell you how to deceive me, if you think it worth your while? Avoid seeming witty (which all do naturally when they are serious), and say nothing that does not seem probable."

The simple fact is that this dull, plodding fellow felt the superiority of Lady Mary's mind, and winced at it. He could not understand her vivacity, which at once attracted and disconcerted him. It is the same story that makes the whole triumph and tragedy of her life. As a wit precociously versed in the classics and endowed with the seemingly incongruous charm of beauty, Lady Mary first attracted her husband and afterwards conquered society; it was the same quality that awakened his suspicions and in the end helped to drive her out of England. She might well have wished the words of Ovid inscribed on her tomb: INGENIO PERII, trusting that the world would not add: *tenerorum lusor amorum.*

But of her character as a wit it will be time to speak more specifically when she has returned from Constantinople in the fulness of her reputation. For a while after her marriage, in 1712, she was considerately kept in the country, while her jealous and already neglectful lord attended to business and pleasure — and commonly the two were one to that prudent soul — in the city. Part of the time she was alone; at other times she stayed with her husband's relatives or was graced

with his own condescending presence. There were cares of house-furnishing and housekeeping to occupy her, and in due season the nursing of her son, who was to turn out one of the reproaches of England and the particular horror of his mother. She endured dutifully these years of surly neglect, but the experience left its sting, and apparently helped to harden her character. "I was then [1714] in Yorkshire," she afterwards wrote. "Mr. W. (who had at that time, that sort of passion for me, that would have made me invisible to all but himself, had it been in his power) had sent me thither. He stayed in town on the account of some business, and the Queen's death detained him there." The fretful *ennui* of *The Bride in the Country* forms the subject of one of her satirical ballads — a striking contrast to the following ideal of *The Lover* which was written, it is said, to Lord Hervey:

No pedant, yet learned; no rake-helly gay,
Or laughing, because he has nothing to say;
To all my whole sex obliging and free,
Yet never be fond of any but me;
In public preserve the decorum that's just,
And show in his eyes he is true to his trust!
Then rarely approach, and respectfully bow,
But not fulsomely pert, nor yet foppishly low.

But when the long hours of public are past,
And we meet with champagne and a chicken at last,
May every fond pleasure that moment endear;
Be banish'd afar both discretion and fear!

Forgetting or scorning the airs of the crowd,
He may cease to be formal, and I to be proud,
Till lost in the joy, we confess that we live,
And he may be rude, and yet I may forgive.

This is Lady Mary's nearest approach to poetry, and one of the lines, at least, has become almost proverbial. Whether or no her protest is true that such a lover she could never find and that until then, like the damsels pursued in the parable of Ovid:

We harden like trees, and like rivers grow cold —

that is another question. Meanwhile, in 1713, soon after her marriage she had written on a window-pane *The Lady's Resolve:*

Whilst thirst of praise and vain desire of fame,
In every age, is every woman's aim;
With courtship pleased, of silly toasters proud,
Fond of a train, and happy in a crowd;
On each proud fop bestowing some kind glance,
Each conquest owing to some loose advance;
While vain coquets affect to be pursued,
And think they're virtuous, if not grossly lewd:
Let this great maxim be my virtue's guide;
In part she is to blame that has been try'd —
"He comes too near, that comes to be deny'd."

The cynical would say that here, as elsewhere, the lady protests too much, and that this was a strange fortification to be needed by a wife of barely a year, in the retirement of the country; they might even add that the lines contain, as it

were prophetically, a sufficient condemnation of her own dubious career when opportunity occurred. I should rather be content with regarding them as another instance of that disillusioned wit that so alarmed her husband, and as a sign of stifled rebellion against the solitude in which her mind was eating out its softer sentiments.

But release was near. She had aided her husband as she could, and even pushed him forward, in his political ambitions. In September of 1714 Mr. Wortley was aiming at a seat in Parliament, and Lady Mary, to urge greater activity, writes a letter, part of which may be quoted as showing something more than her wifely zeal:

> I am glad you think of serving your friends; I hope it will put you in mind of serving yourself. I need not enlarge upon the advantages of money; every thing we see, and every thing we hear, puts us in remembrance of it. If it was possible to restore liberty to your country, or limit the encroachments of pre—ve [prerogative], by reducing yourself to a garret, I should be pleased to share so glorious a poverty with you; but as the world is, and will be, 't is a sort of duty to be rich, that it may be in one's power to do good; riches being another word for power, towards the obtaining of which the first necessary qualification is impudence, and (as Demosthenes said of pronunciation in oratory) the second is impudence, and the third, still, impudence.

In 1716 Mr. Wortley was appointed Ambassador to the Porte, and on August 1, he, with his wife, three-year-old son, and suite set out for

Constantinople. I shall not follow them on their journey across the Continent, nor try to give an account of what Lady Mary saw, and so vividly described, in Paris and Vienna, in the wild regions of Hungary, and then in the home of the Turk. She was an ideal traveller, adapting herself facilely to the customs of the place, and feeling no prudish alarm at the different moral codes that met her. In particular she writes with curious complacency of the Austrian "sub-marriages," and remarks of the Italian ladies that "the custom of cicisbeos has very much improved their airs." It is only fair to add her amusing apology from Vienna: "I'll assure you, a lady, who is very much my friend here, told me but yesterday, how much I was obliged to her for justifying my conduct in a conversation on my subject, where it was publicly asserted that I could not possibly have common-sense, that I had been about town above a fortnight, and had made no steps towards commencing an amour." And at Constantinople she found the ways of life peculiarly to her taste; the Turkish women she declared to be "the only free people in the empire."

All these things she described in letters of which, after the manner of the age, she kept faithful, or unfaithful, copies, or which she afterwards wrote up for the half-public from her diaries. On them her fame as a writer depends al-

most exclusively to-day, and it must be admitted that they fully deserve their reputation. Letters of travel somehow have generally less staying power than those from home; what they give can be better given in a formal treatise, while they miss the little touches of satire and friendship, the pleasant familiarities, the display of character at ease in its proper environment, which make the charm or the humour of the best correspondence. These homelier qualities for the most part Lady Mary's epistles, as they may be called, do not possess. But they have other traits, rarer, if less engaging. She shows a kind of familiarity with things strange, which carries the reader with her. Her language is clear and firm, but less formal than that of Pope and Bolingbroke and the other professed epistolary authors of the day. She puts a curb on their incurable trick of dealing in moral platitudes. In a word, she strikes the happy and difficult balance between the general and the particular, the descriptive and the personal. She stands to the front among the second grade of letter-writers.

One feels her excellence in a special way in the letters exchanged with Pope, who is here by no means at his best. For a short while before her departure for the East she had been permitted by Mr. Wortley to live in London and to renew her acquaintance with the intellectual society of whom Pope was the acknowledged chief, and it

was under this exciting stimulus that she wrote her *Town Eclogues*, three of which the mysterious Curll published piratically, in 1716, under the title of *Court Poems by a Lady of Quality*, with the intimation that they were really composed by "the laudible translator of Homer." For revenge Pope invited the publisher to the Swan in Fleet Street, where he administered a dose of emetic — "to save him from a beating" — and afterwards printed the story of the affair in *A full and true Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison, on the Body of Edmund Curll.* Whether or not the poems were partly from the hand of Gay and Pope, as there is some reason to believe, cannot be certainly decided. They were apparently handed about the coterie in manuscript, and were but one move in the dangerous game Lady Mary then began to play. At any rate, the intimacy between her and Pope quickly ripened to gallantry, and letters of the most exaggerated sentiment followed the lady on her Eastern wanderings. He would be a bold critic who should attempt to say how much of this philandering on the part of the little man was sincere, and how much a bad literary copy of the letters of Voiture; likely enough the writer himself would have been puzzled to discriminate; it was the prescribed rôle. We may give him the credit of believing that at times a note of genuine passion is heard breaking through, or making use of, the

convention of the day — as in that touching appeal to her after a fit of illness:

This last winter has seen great revolutions in my little affairs. My sickness was preceded by the death of my father, which happened within a few days after I had writ to you inviting myself to meet you in your journey homewards. I have yet a mother of great age and infirmities, whose last precarious days of life I am now attending, with such a solemn pious kind of officiousness as a melancholy recluse watches the last risings and fallings of a dying taper. My natural temper is pretty much broke, and I live half a hermit within five miles of London [at Chiswick]. A letter from you soothes me in my reveries; it is like a conversation with some spirit of the other world, the least glimpse of whose favour sets one above all taste of the things of this: indeed, there is little or nothing angelical left behind you; the women here are — women. I cannot express how I long to see you face to face; if ever you come again, I shall never be able to behave with decency. I shall walk, look and talk at such a rate, that all the town must know I have seen something more than human. Come, for God's sake; come, Lady Mary; come quickly!

And how did the lady, addressed in these tones of almost blasphemous devotion, reply? In the extreme of good sense, it must be allowed. From Vienna she had written the 14th September, 1716:

Perhaps you 'll laugh at me for thanking you gravely, for all the obiiging concern you express for me. 'T is certain that I may, if I please, take the fine things you say to me for wit and raillery, and it may be it would be taking them right. But I never in my life was half so disposed to believe you in earnest; and that distance which

makes the continuation of your friendship improbable, has very much increased my faith in it, and I find that I have (as well as the rest of my sex), whatever face I set on 't, a strong disposition to believe in miracles.

That is not just the answer we may fancy to have been desired by a gentleman who no doubt preferred the wit to be all on his own side and the simplicity on the lady's. If there is any one single-minded utterance in his correspondence, it is the exclamation: "A plague of female wisdom: It makes a man ten times more uneasy than his wont." Again, poor Lady Mary! she was yet to learn, what she might have guessed from such a confession, that superiority in a woman is an attraction that too often turns into what most repels.

Nor was Lady Mary's common-sense confined to matters of gallantry alone. In 1718 Pope had sent her the story (which he wrote also to Martha Blount, and doubtless to a dozen other correspondents) of a young farmer and his sweetheart who had been struck by lightning while taking shelter under the shade of a haycock. He had treated the event in rather a high-flown style, and had added a couple of epitaphs, one of which was engraved on a stone monument over the pair:

> When Eastern lovers feed the funeral fire,
> On the same pile their faithful fair expire;
> Here pitying Heaven that virtue mutual found,
> And blasted both, that it might neither wound.

Hearts so sincere th' Almighty saw well pleased,
Sent his own lightning, and the victims seized.

To which Lady Mary replied:

I must applaud your good nature, in supposing that your pastoral lovers (vulgarly called haymakers) would have lived in everlasting joy and harmony, if the lightning had not interrupted their scheme of happiness. I see no reason to imagine that John Hughes [she had originally written the true name, Hewet, but coolly changed it for a word of one syllable, *metri gratia*] and Sarah Drew were either wiser or more virtuous than their neighbours. . . . Since you desire me to try my skill in an epitaph, I think the following lines perhaps more just, though not so poetical as yours:

Here lie John Hughes and Sarah Drew;
Perhaps you'll say, what's that to you?
Believe me, friend, much may be said
On this poor couple that are dead.
On Sunday next they should have married;
But see how oddly things are carried!
On Thursday last it rain'd and lighten'd;
These tender lovers, sadly frighten'd,
Shelter'd beneath the cocking hay,
In hopes to pass the storm away;
But the bold thunder found them out
(Commission'd for that end, no doubt),
And, seizing on their trembling breath,
Consign'd them to the shades of death.
Who knows if 't was not kindly done?
For had they seen the next year's sun,
A beaten wife and cuckold swain
Had jointly cursed the marriage chain;
Now they are happy in their doom,
For P. has wrote upon their tomb.

One surmises that this style of compliment was not entirely to the taste of Pope, and that the author of *The Rape of the Lock* may have winced when his own heroics were turned into burlesque. There was, one sees, a pretty *casus belli* lurking under this exchange of courtesies from the beginning, and the quarrel, when it came, was sure to be bitter and relentless. In 1718 the Wortleys were recalled, and Lady Mary returned home reluctantly, carrying with her a daughter (destined, after a season of anxiety, to give her as much satisfaction as her son was to bring disgrace), the practice of inoculation, which with much difficulty she got naturalized in England, and — to join things disparate — a mind quite disencumbered of conventions.

In England, we soon find the family established at Twickenham, where Pope (it was Lady Mary herself who later on dubbed him "the wicked wasp of Twickenham") had made himself the centre of a little society of wits, and from whence he shot his venomous bolts at any one who balked at his intellectual and moral supremacy. I should like, from the memoirs and letters of the day, to draw out a picture of that brilliant and perilous society. Across the river lay Richmond Lodge; Hampton Court and Kew, with their royal associations, were near by; Dawley, where Bolingbroke retired to sulk and scheme, was also within driving distance. And when the resources

of these places failed, London offered its dissipations, was, indeed, already pushing its way up the river to absorb these half-rural retreats. Lady Mary, we may presume, was heartily welcomed into this circle. A "rake at reading," as she called herself, she had at the age of twenty translated the Latin version of Epictetus under the direction of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury. Her satirical poems had already attracted notice, and her fame had been increased by her letters, which, after the manner of the day, were passed from hand to hand. Now, at the age of thirty, she was returning, in the full flush of her beauty, and with the glamour of the East upon her. Pope had made "Wortley's eyes" notorious, and was at no pains to conceal his passion and, so to speak, proprietorship. "Ah, friend," he wrote to Gay —

> Ah, friend, 't is true — this truth you lovers know —
> In vain my structures rise, my gardens grow,
> In vain fair Thames reflects the double scenes
> Of hanging mountains, and of sloping greens:
> Joy lives not here; to happier seats it flies,
> And only dwells where W—— casts her eyes.

It is not strange if the lady's head was turned for a while, and if she fell into a way of life that invited scandal. "In general," she writes to her sister, "gallantry never was in so elevated a figure as it is at present. Twenty pretty fellows (the Duke of Wharton being president and chief di-

rector) have formed themselves into a committee of gallantry. They call themselves *Schemers*, and meet regularly three times a week to consult on gallant schemes for the advantage and advancement of that branch of happiness. . . . 'T is true they have the envy and curses of the old and ugly of both sexes, and a general persecution from all old women; but this is no more than all reformations must expect in their beginning." The friendship of Wharton ("Poor W. . . . nipt in folly's broadest bloom!") was not without its danger for the woman who accepted it, and there are other names that have become associated too closely with Lady Mary's. She may have reckoned on this peril when she entered the lists of gallantry, but, though warned, she can scarcely have foreseen the true nature of the calamity before her from the other side of that life.

"It was about the time of Cowley," says Dr. Johnson, "that wit, which had been till then used for *Intellection*, in contradiction to *Will*, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now bears." Dr. Johnson needed only to consult the career of his favourite Pope to have spoken more precisely; or, indeed, he might have quoted Pope's explicit words: "The life of a wit is a warfare upon earth." And it was a war for hearth and gods. Said Chesterfield one day in Parliament, giving at once a shrewd definition and an apt illustration: "Wit, my Lords, is a sort of

property — the property of those who have it, and too often the only property they have to depend on. It is indeed a precarious dependence. We, my Lords, thank God, have a dependence of another kind." Viewed on its personal side, the game was simply to raise one's self in estimation by rendering a rival, or, if need be, a friend, ridiculous or odious. Cleverness was the arms, vanity the motive. Personal satire was raised into the chief branch of literature, and the motto to all comers, *Woe to the vanquished*. Every feint of warfare was legitimate — so long as it was not made ignominious by detection. One of the commonest stratagems, as old in practice as the days of Martial, but now employed scientifically, was to write a libellous poem and accuse another of being the author, whereby you killed two birds with one stone —

Vipereumque vomat nostro sub nomine virus.

The result is a literature which, in its lower reaches, would be deprived of all human sympathy, were not envy and malice still, like an inverted charity, one of the strongest and most binding of social instincts.

Now, the tragedy of Lady Mary's life was just this, that, being a woman, and a beautiful woman of the world, she entered the lists and was beaten. Men could take their buffetings and continue in the fight. Mrs. Manley, too, might

shock society and even suffer imprisonment for her libellous *New Atlantis* — she had no character to lose. Mrs. Astell might brave the world and the male "puppies" by her *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* — she was never properly *of* the world. And, at a later date, Mrs. Montagu and the other *blues* might write and palaver to their heart's content — they were careful not to enter into real competition with their sensitive lords; they belong to the distinctly female current of eighteenth-century life. But it was otherwise with Lady Mary. She took the field where her name was at stake, and having lost that, she lost all. She found that in this game the men, like the Abbé Galiani's *grand fripon là-haut*, played with loaded dice. It may seem to us unjust, hard, absurd; it was the fact.

She herself knew the prejudice under which she fought. As early as 1710 she had written to her mentor, Dr. Burnet: "There is hardly a character in the world more despicable, or more liable to universal ridicule, than that of a learned woman." Nor was she without intimate knowledge of the tenderness of a woman's name under scandal. There was, for instance, her neighbour, Mrs. Murray, who had been attacked by her footmen. — "A very odd whim has entered the head of little Mrs. Murray," writes our Lady; "do you know she won't visit me this winter? I, according to the usual integrity of my heart and simplicity

of my manners, with great *naïveté* desired to explain with her on the subject, and she answered that she was convinced that I had made the ballad upon her, and was resolved never to speak to me again." It is an odd thing that so much of Lady Mary's trouble should have arisen from poems she did not write. And as for this indecent ballad, whether she was guilty of it or not, she certainly stands credited with an *Epistle from Arthur Grey, the Footman*, which might well bring a blush to the "lovely nymph" to whom it is so flatteringly addressed.

And of the more particular source of danger Lady Mary certainly received due warning. Addison had written to her: "Leave Pope as soon as you can; he will certainly play you some devilish trick else"; but she preferred to dally with the fire. As to the causes of the quarrel, the new biography, unfortunately, leaves us as much at puzzle as we were before; the documents are still, and apparently will always be, wanting. According to the tradition preserved by Lady Louisa Stuart, Lady Mary's own statement was "that at some ill-chosen time, when she least expected what romances call a *declaration*, he made such passionate love to her, as, in spite of her utmost endeavours to be angry and look grave, provoked an immoderate fit of laughter; from which moment he became her implacable enemy" — naturally, and for the same reason that he raged at

Colley Cibber's infamous anecdote. But there is large room to doubt Lady Louisa's story. It is notable, for one thing, that as early as 1722 Lady Mary "very seldom" saw "Mr. Pope," whereas the rupture did not occur until about 1727, when it may be observed, she was in her thirty-ninth year. As a matter of fact, Spence gives quite a different, and utterly trivial, explanation of the breach, which he professes to have had from Lady Mary. And as for Pope, his story is that "he discontinued their society [that of Lady Mary and Lord Hervey] because he found they had too much wit for him" — which, in a general way, sounds likest the truth. At least it tallies with the account of the matter that Pope repeated in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot:*

> Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit,
> Sappho can tell you how this man was bit.

More dupe than wit! No, that is too bad, Mr. Pope; let us take your manuscript version:

> Once, and but once, his heedless youth was bit,
> And liked that dangerous thing, a female wit:
> Safe, as he thought, though all the prudent chid;
> He writ no libels, but my Lady did.

Now, whether the scurrilous ballads on Pope, published by the Duke of Wharton or Sir William Yonge, were written before or after the quarrel, and whether, as Pope believed, Lady Mary had a finger in them, does not appear. It is at least sus-

picious that Lady Mary has again to deny her part in verses that might have disagreeable consequences. Certainly there is good evidence to show that she wrote part or all of the *Verses to the Imitator of Horace*, which came out in the full tide of the quarrel and incited Pope to retort with epigrams of almost incredible savageness. He fastened the name of Sappho upon her; he ruined her reputation for the time, and for the future.

One question raised by these incriminations can scarcely be passed over, delicate as it may seem. Was Lady Mary really the immoral creature he made her? Now, in judging Pope we must remember always that he was, perhaps, the greatest writer of personal satire the world has ever known, and that he acquired his fame and his terrors not by striking at random, but by striking *true*. When Hervey, or Lady Mary, tried to injure him by comparing him with Horace:

> Thine is just such an image of *his* pen,
> As thou thyself art of the sons of men,
> Where our own species in burlesque we trace,
> A sign-post likeness of the human face,
> That is at once resemblance and disgrace.
> Horace can laugh, is delicate, is clear,
> You only coarsely rail, or darkly sneer;
> His style is elegant, his diction pure,
> *Whilst none thy crabbed numbers can endure;*
> Hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure —

they might pain him by laughing at his humble

origin and his crooked body, but to the world at large their physical satire would appear merely stupid and brutal, for the reason that in its moral and intellectual parts it was so palpably false. To call his numbers crabbed was to discredit their own taste; to speak of the hard heart of the author of *Eloisa to Abelard* was equally to discredit their own feelings. Who, in those days, had not dropped a tear to the concluding lines of that poem, addressed to Lady Mary herself when in the Orient:

> And sure if fate some future bard should join
> In sad similitude of griefs to mine,
> Condemned whole years in absence to deplore,
> And image charms he must behold no more;
> Such if there be, who loves so long, so well;
> Let him our sad, our tender story tell;
> The well-sung woes will soothe my pensive ghost;
> He best can paint them who shall feel them most.

To such satire as Lady Mary's Pope could say exultingly, "It is a pleasure and comfort at once to find that with so much mind as so much malice must have to accuse or blacken my character, it can fix on no one ill or immoral thing in my life." He did not himself proceed in that way. He might, he undoubtedly did, exaggerate and distort, but he started with significant facts. To take a single example, when he turned for revenge upon Hervey himself he struck with terrible precision at the weak points:

P. Let Sporus tremble —
A. What! that thing of silk?
Sporus! that mere white curd of ass's milk?
Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
P. Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt that stinks and stings!

The traits can be documented one by one in the opinion of the day, and there is no error in characterization to weaken their force. Pulteney in 1731 had called Hervey "half-man, half-woman," in a pamphlet, and had fought a notorious duel for the words. The Duchess of Marlborough, in 1737, wrote him down "the most wretched profligate man that ever was born, besides ridiculous; a painted face, and not a tooth in his head"; and Lord Hailes added: "His daily food was a small quantity of Asses' milk and a flour biscuit; once a week he indulged himself with eating an apple; he used emetics daily.... Lord Hervey used paint to soften his ghastly appearance." Let us hasten to add, on our own part, that Hervey was a man of uncommon abilities and knowledge of human nature, although he could not write verse. Now, in the same way Pope sets about his satire of Hervey's friend, Lady Mary. She had, though in all innocence it may be, allowed a certain Frenchman to address letters of gallantry to her, and had invested sums of money for him in the unfortunate South Sea Stock; Pope writes:

Whence hapless Monsieur much complains at Paris
Of wrongs from Duchesses and Lady Maries.

Again, Mr. Wortley was notoriously avaricious, and his wife had early contracted something of his penuriousness; Pope writes:

Avidien, or his wife . . .
Sell their presented partridges and fruits,
And humbly live on cabbages and roots:
One half-pint bottle serves them both to dine,
And is at once their vinegar and wine.
But on some lucky day (as when they found
A lost bank-bill, or heard their son was drowned)
At such a feast old vinegar to spare,
Is what two souls so generous cannot bear:
Oil, though it stink, they drop by drop impart,
But souse the cabbage with a bounteous heart.

Again, Lady Mary's sister fell into a melancholy, and, having been wrested from the care of Lord Grange, her husband's brother, was kept in confinement by Lady Mary; Pope writes:

Who starves a sister, or forswears a debt.

Again, Lady Mary grew with years into slovenly habits; Pope writes:

As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock;
Or Sappho at her toilet's greasy task,
With Sappho fragrant at an evening mask.

All this cunning in satire makes it hard to believe that there was not some basis for the more licentious lines, which need not be here quoted.

And the common opinion of the day confirms such a view. Thus, one is not surprised to find the mild Mrs. Montagu, in one of her letters, alluding to the scandal of Lady Mary's life as a thing well known, or to see her mentioned casually in one of Chesterfield's *Characters* as "eminent for her parts and her vices." Lord Chesterfield was no common scandal-monger; he measured his words, and I confess that this chance phrase of his has had great weight in forming my judgement. Possibly her reputation was merely the result of Pope's satire. Now, satire, however based on facts, has never scrupled to add its own superstructure, and we may close this discussion, already too long, by saying that the lady was *indiscreet*. Even her latest panegyrist, Miss Symonds, grants as much as that.

The upshot of it was that in July of 1739, at the age of fifty, Lady Mary left her home and her family and set out for her long, lonely sojourn in Italy and France. No special quarrel with her husband has been unearthed, and she continued to write to him letters full of respect; they had apparently just drifted apart. Her daughter was married; her son was totally estranged from her. England had been made uncomfortable, and, when opportunity offered, she took herself out of the way. Her correspondence during these years of exile is full of interesting details, and pages might be made up of extracts on a variety

of topics. It is not, in my judgement, as entertaining as the letters from the Orient, and it indicates, also, I think, a certain letting down of her character. The fact is, her career shows a slow and steady degeneration from the frank, fondly-wise girlhood which Miss Symonds has thrown into pleasant and artistic relief. More especially, her war with the wits had hardened and coarsened her mind. It is not easy, for instance, to forgive the complete lack of feeling she displays towards her son, however worthless and wild he may have been. It is not pretty to begin a letter, as she does one to her husband from Genoa, "I am sorry to trouble you on so disagreeable a subject as our son"; and she rarely mentions his name without some rancorous remark. The best that can be said is that her language is no more outrageous than that used by Queen Caroline in regard to her graceless son, the Prince of Wales.

On the death of her husband, in 1761, she returned to England to settle up his affairs; he left, it was estimated, £800,000 in money, and £17,000 per annum in land, mines, etc.; an enormous fortune for those days. She took a small furnished "harpsichord" house in Great George Street, and there for a while was the wonder of London. Walpole's account of his visit to her is one of the best-known *morceaux* in his Correspondence — a strange and terrible pendant to his portrait of her as he had seen her in Florence twenty-two years earlier:

Lady Mary Wortley is arrived; I have seen her; I think her avarice, her dirt, and her vivacity, are all increased. Her dress, like her language, is a *galimatias* of several countries; the ground-work, rags, and the embroidery, nastiness. She wears no cap, no handkerchief, no gown, no petticoat, no shoes. An old black-laced hood represents the first, the fur of a horseman's coat, which replaces the third, serves for the second; a dimity petticoat is deputy, and officiates for the fourth; and slippers act the part of the last. When I was at Florence, and she was expected there, we were drawing *Sortes Virgilianas* — for her; we literally drew

Insanam vatem aspicies.

It would have been a stronger prophecy now, even than it was then.

Again, and for the last time, Lady Mary suffered from the impertinence of masculine wit, and what a change from the picture of the young girl toasted at the Kit-Cat Club! We may believe that her latest enemy drew freely upon his imagination.

She died August 21, 1762, leaving, as Walpole wrote, "twenty-one large volumes in prose and verse, in manuscript."

A PHILOSOPHER AMONG THE WITS

A PHILOSOPHER AMONG THE WITS

THE beauty and charm of Bishop Berkeley's character have, in a way, been well known. Pope's praise, to whom praising was not over-common, is familiar to all: "To Berkeley every virtue under heaven"; and two introductions still recall the impression he first made on the great world of London. Swift, presenting him to Earl Berkeley, with whom he was somewhat vaguely connected, is said to have used the words, with what smile we can imagine: "My Lord, here is a young gentleman of your family. I can assure your lordship it is a much greater honour to you to be related to him, than to him to be related to you." Later, the Earl introduced him to Atterbury by request, and, when Berkeley had left the room, asked whether his cousin answered the Bishop's expectations. "So much understanding," was Atterbury's reply, "so much knowledge, so much innocence, and such humility, I did not think had been the portion of any but angels till I saw this gentleman."

But withal our acquaintance with the genial philosopher was not as close as we should have desired it to be. Fraser's biography, an excellent piece of work, depended largely on the letters to a lifelong friend, Thomas Prior, which unfortunately deal for the most part with details of busi-

ness and what may be called the machinery of life. A very few letters to Dr. Samuel Johnson, the first president of King's College (now Columbia University), himself a metaphysician of no mean merit, give tantalizing glimpses of what Berkeley must have been as a philosophical correspondent, and one or two other letters reveal his deeper emotions; but that was all. We are peculiarly grateful, therefore, for Mr. Rand's new volume,[1] which contains the correspondence between Berkeley and Sir John Percival, afterwards first Earl of Egmont, extending, with some gaps, from the year 1709 to 1742. The letters are not all that we might expect; but they correct a number of minor errors in the traditional life of Berkeley and enlarge our knowledge of him in an agreeable manner. Nor are they without occasional entertainment. They show, for instance, that he had the economical habit of repeating his good things, and that he practised another sort of economy in adapting his style to his hearer. The most romantic letter of the collection, written from Ischia, closes a glowing description of the island with this amusing turn:

> As riches and honours have no footing here, the people are unacquainted with the vices that attend them, but in lieu thereof they have got an ugly habit of murdering one another for trifles.

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[1] *Berkeley and Percival.* By Benjamin Rand. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. (Cambridge University Press.) 1914.

That was language good enough for a lord, but when the story was to be dressed up a couple of months later for a great wit like Mr. Pope, this is how the letter runs:

> The inhabitants of this delicious isle, as they are without riches and honours, so are they without the follies and vices that attend them; and were they but as much strangers to revenge as they are to avarice and ambition, they might in fact answer the poetical notions of the golden age. But they have got, as an alloy to their happiness, an ill habit of murdering one another on slight offences.

Thus do evil communications corrupt good language! Nevertheless, and despite this frowning example, the most interesting of the letters to Percival are those in which Berkeley tells a little of his intercourse with the wits when he was first lionized in London. If he was not quite, as his wife said of him after his death, "the greatest wit of his age," he was great enough as a pure writer of literature to stand as an equal in that brave and close-knit society of which Pope and Swift were the acknowledged masters.

Berkeley's association with that circle began in 1713, on his coming over to England at the age of twenty-seven, and owed its strength to his reputation as a writer and to his force of character. Though of English descent, he was, like Swift, born in Ireland. His early education was obtained at the Duke of Ormond's excellent school in

Kilkenny. In 1700 he entered Trinity College, Dublin, where he was to remain, as student, fellow, lecturer, and tutor, for thirteen years. He was in these days, if we may believe one or two anecdotes, marked by some eccentricity of manner, much given, certainly, to introspection and very early conscious of his life mission. In the volume of the *Letters and Unpublished Writings* Mr. Fraser has printed the Commonplace Book in which, some time about his twenty-first year, he jotted down his occasional thoughts — surely one of the most interesting and most extraordinary philosophical documents in existence. Among the first entries are these remarkable statements:

I know there is a mighty sect of men will oppose me, but yet I may expect to be supported by those whose minds are not so far overgrown with madness. These are far the greatest part of mankind — especially Moralists, Divines, Politicians; in a word, all but Mathematicians and Natural Philosophers (I mean only the hypothetical gentlemen). Experimental philosophers have nothing whereat to be offended in me.

Newton begs his principles; I demonstrate mine.

A little further on he continues, but with less confidence in the "greatest part of mankind":

I am young, I am an upstart, I am pretender, I am vain. Very well. I shall endeavour patiently to bear up under the most lessening, vilifying appellations the pride and rage of man can devise. But one thing I know I am not guilty of. I do not pin my faith on the sleeve of

any great man. I act not out of prejudice or prepossession. I do not adhere to any opinion because it is an old one, a reviv'd one, a fashionable one, or one that I have spent much time in the study and cultivation of.

To any one at that time who knew the position of Newton in the intellectual life of England and the world, and considered the isolation of a youth of twenty in Dublin, such words, if they had fallen under his observation, must have seemed the ravings of impertinent folly. They were nothing of that. They were the self-assurance of a genius who, in the solitude of his chamber, was meditating a "New Principle," which, apparently springing almost full-fledged from his brain, was to effect a revolution in philosophy.

His first attempt on the world, *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*, was deliberately cautious and preparatory. It was followed in a year by the *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, dedicated, no doubt for a purpose, to the same Lord Pembroke to whom Locke had addressed his *Essay*. The issue was now declared, and in what language! —

Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which comprise the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind; that their *being* is to be perceived or known; that, consequently, so long as they are not actually perceived by

me, or do not exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit.

Copies of his book Berkeley sent to various scholars, among others to Samuel Clarke, the most eminent theologian of the day, and to Whiston, the successor of Newton at Cambridge. It was largely ignored, and sometimes ridiculed. Whiston, for instance, in his *Memoirs of Clarke*, has recorded the cold reception it met with in that quarter. "Mr. Berkeley," he says, "published, A.D. 1710, at Dublin, this metaphysic notion — that Matter was not a real thing; nay, that the common opinion of its reality was groundless, if not ridiculous. He was pleased to send Dr. Clarke and myself each of us a book. After we had both perused it, I went to Dr. Clarke, and discoursed with him about it to this effect: That I [being not a metaphysician] was not able to answer Mr. Berkeley's [subtle] premises, though I did not believe his [absurd] conclusion. I therefore desired that he, who was deep in such subtleties, but did not appear to believe Mr. Berkeley's conclusion, would answer him. Which task he declined." Evidently something was yet to be done to force attention and to rectify misapprehension, and Berkeley set about writing his *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, in which, if ever anywhere since Plato taught in the Academy, the sybil of metaphysics and the muse of literature kissed.

With the manuscript of the *Dialogues* he came over to London, and the letter to Percival, reporting his voyage, dated January 26, 1713, contains this exciting statement:

> The first news I heard upon coming to town was that Mr. Steele did me the honour to desire to be acquainted with me: upon which I have been to see him. He is confined with the gout, and is, as I am informed, writing a play since he gave over the *Spectators*. This gentleman is extremely civil and obliging, and I propose no small satisfaction on the conversation of him and his ingenious friends, which as an encouragement he tells me are to be met with at his house.

Somebody, it appears, had given Steele a copy of the *Principles*, and that, says Berkeley, was "the ground of his inclination to my acquaintance." There is a doubtful tradition that Berkeley "never spoke or thought highly of Steele's ability"; certainly in these early letters praise of all sorts abounds. He admires the elegance of Steele's house in Bloomsbury Square, finds his conversation "very cheerful" and abounding "with wit and good sense," and thinks it a sufficient recompense for the pains of writing his *Principles* that it gave him "some share in the friendship of so worthy a man." Steele was about to start the *Guardian*, and to this Berkeley contributed fourteen papers.

Among the "ingenious friends" was Addison, whom Berkeley no doubt met in Bloomsbury Square. The inevitable comparison is made.

"Wit," he thinks, "natural good sense, generous sentiments, and enterprising genius, with a peculiar delicacy and easiness of writing, seem those qualities which distinguish Mr. Steele. Mr. Addison has the same talents in a high degree, and is likewise a great philosopher, having applied himself to speculative studies more than any of the wits that I know." Perhaps not many of us who profess criticism to-day would call Addison exactly a "great philosopher," and some who think they are critics have got in a way of lauding Steele generally at the expense of his more famous friend; but Berkeley really ought to have known a philosopher, and his proportioning of praise will bring comfort to those who may still think of Steele and Addison about as Thackeray did.

'T is pleasant, too, to see these Whiggish sons of Belial paying court to so staunch a Tory; for Berkeley was high enough in that faith to drink the health of Dr. Sacheverell, though he kept himself out of the backward-facing files of the Non-Jurors by declaring he could discover no difference between a king *de jure* and a king *de facto*. He had, indeed, come to town at a strange moment, when the wits were making a pretence of political good feeling. And so, while he is breakfasting with Swift one morning in March — one of the "rabble of Irish Parsons drinking my chocolate," I fear Swift thought him — who

should come in but Mr. Addison; and "the good temper he showed was construed by me," says Berkeley, "as a sign of an approaching coalition of parties." That was rather innocent in view of what was soon to happen. Yet there were other signs of reconciliation, and Berkeley was again present at one of the most famous of these scenes. A fortnight or so after Swift's breakfast, there was a more startling conjunction of planets, when Addison's glorification of Whiggism in *Cato* was acted, with a prologue by Pope, who, as he said, "was clapped into a staunch Whig, sore against his will, at almost every two lines." Was the writer of the prologue repeating, a little ruefully, one of the playwright's sly jests made at his expense? If so Berkeley, too, must have heard it, being one of the party on that memorable night, and recalled it when he sent his next letter to Percival:

On Tuesday last Mr. Addison's play entitled Cato was acted the first time. I am informed the front boxes were all bespoke for nine days, a fortnight before the play was acted. I was present with Mr. Addison, and two or three more friends in a side box, where we had a table and two or three flasks of burgundy and champagne, with which the author (who is a very sober man) thought it necessary to support his spirits in the concern he was then under; and indeed it was a pleasant refreshment to us all between the acts. He has performed a very difficult task with great success, having introduced the noblest ideas of virtue and religion upon the stage with the greatest applause, and in the fullest audience that

ever was known. The actors were at the expence of new habits, which were very magnificent, and Mr. Addison takes no part of the profit, which will be very great, to himself. Some parts of the prologue, which were written by Mr. Pope, a Tory and even a Papist, were hissed, being thought to favour [query, savour?] of whiggism, but the clap got much the hiss.

These are charming episodes of peace; but if Berkeley really thought that "wit is of no party," as he wrote on Swift's death, that savage partisan could have told him a different story. The fact is, one ingredient was wanting to Berkeley as a wit — the tincture of malice. He said and wrote no evil of any of these men, whether Whig or Tory, and we believe that in his benign presence the tongue of slander was silenced and the insinuating smile rebuked. The world he lived in, as was proper for one of his philosophy, was the world created by his own mind — a region of calm thoughts and fair benevolence. And so of all his comradeships one likes best to think of him with Dr. Arbuthnot, the genial Scotsman, whose name comes to us out of that age with the same sweetness and the same general approbation as his own. "This day I dined at Dr. Arbuthnot's lodging in the Queen's palace" — what would we not give for a full report of that dinner, and to know how these two gentlemen from Ireland and Scotland discussed over their wine the new and scandal-making idealism! "This Dr. Arbuthnot," Berkeley adds, "is the first proselyte I have made by

the Treatise I came over to print, which will soon be published. His wit you have an instance of in his *Art of Political Lying*, and the tracts of *John Bull* of which he is the author. He is the Queen's domestic physician, and in great esteem with the whole Court. Nor is he less valuable for his learning, being a great philosopher, and reckoned among the first mathematicians of the age. Besides which he has likewise the character of very uncommon virtue and probity."

That is about all we hear of Berkeley among the wits, and most of this is in the correspondence with Percival during the nine or ten months he was in London before his travels. At the solicitation of Swift he was now appointed chaplain to Lord Peterborough, sent as ambassador extraordinary to Sicily for the coronation of the king; and again he was abroad as tutor to the son of another friend of Swift's, St. George Ashe, Bishop of Clogher. Altogether he was on the Continent from 1713 to 1721, with an interval of two years at home. He was an observant and intelligent traveller, but his foreign correspondence contains little of personal interest. His first letter, from Paris, tells of dining with Matthew Prior, whom he describes as "a man of good sense and learning," living "magnificently as becomes the Queen's Plenipotentiary." The same letter gives also a hint of a more significant meeting. "Today," he writes, "he [the Abbé d'Aubigné] is to

introduce me to Father Malebranche, a famous philosopher in this city." Now, though fundamentally different, there were so many superficial points of resemblance between the Berkeleian idealism and that of Malebranche that Berkeley, to his utter indignation, had been accused of borrowing his system from the Frenchman and his English disciple, John Norris. An account, therefore, of this meeting in Paris might have been of great interest and even of historical value; but of what passed between the two rivals Berkeley tells not a word, nor is there any mention in his correspondence of a second visit. What shall we say, then, of the amusing story told by Bishop Stock, the early biographer of Berkeley? —

> Having now more leisure than when he first passed through that city, he took care to pay his respects to his illustrious rival in metaphysical sagacity. He found the ingenious Father in a cell, cooking, in a small pipkin, a medicine for a disorder with which he was then troubled — an inflammation on the lungs. The conversation naturally turned on Berkeley's system, of which he had received some knowledge from a translation just published. But the issue of the debate proved tragical to poor Malebranche. In the heat of the disputation, he raised his voice so high, and gave way so freely to the natural impetuosity of a man of parts and a Frenchman, that he brought on himself a violent increase of his disorder, which carried him off a few days after.

There is something so picturesque and piquant in this altercation between the two great ideal-

ists of the age that one hates to reject the anecdote as apocryphal, but unfortunately the date of Malebranche's demise is October 13, 1715, and it seems pretty clear from the letters to Percival that Berkeley was in London through all the later months of that year. Accordingly Mr. Rand, as a ruthless servant of research, throws the "myth" out, crop and root. But, after all, Stock was an intimate friend of the family, and we shall continue to believe that he reports the confused reminiscence of an earlier meeting, perhaps that of 1713, for which he invents the tragical conclusion. That would correspond with the ways of metaphysicians and of biographers: it is not said that Berkeley raised his voice.

Of Berkeley's life during the nine years succeeding his European travels only two events need here be noted. In 1723 Hester Vanhomrigh, Swift's Vanessa, died, and Berkeley, to his great surprise, found himself co-heir and executor to a woman with whom he had never exchanged a single word. She had suddenly altered her will to the disadvantage of the Dean after the quarrel over Stella, and thus once again, this time involuntarily, Swift was the benefactor of his Irish friend. The next year Berkeley was named Dean of Derry, "the best Deanery in this kingdom," supposed to be worth £1500 per annum.

With these two accretions to his fortune Berke-

ley felt himself in a position to press forward a scheme which was very much on his mind. In a letter to Percival, dated March 4, 1723, he had, so far as we know, given the first intimation of the great romantic project of his life:

> It is now about ten months since I have determined with myself to spend the residue of my days in the Island of Bermuda, where I trust in Providence I may be the mean instrument of doing good to mankind. Your Lordship is not to be told that the reformation of manners among the English in our western plantations, and the propagation of the Gospel among the American savages, are two points of high moment. The natural way of doing this is by founding a college or seminary in some convenient part of the West Indies, where the English youth of our plantations may be educated in such sort as to supply the churches with pastors of good morals and good learning, a thing (God knows!) much wanted. In the same seminary a number of young American savages may be also educated till they have taken their degree of Master of Arts.

And in another letter of later date we find him sending, to the same person, a copy of the verses which hitherto we had supposed the product of his retirement in Rhode Island. The last four lines are among the most hackneyed quotations in the language, but the whole poem is so important as indicating the sentiment which animated Berkeley and which the French were later to make one of the compelling forces of revolution, that it ought to be transcribed here in its primitive form:

The muse, offended at this age, these climes
  Where nought she found fit to rehearse,
Waits now in distant lands for better times,
  Producing subjects worthy verse.
In happy climes where from the genial sun
  And virgin earth fair scenes ensue,
Such scenes as shew that fancy is outdone,
  And make poetic fiction true.
In happy climes, the seat of innocence,
  Where nature guides and virtue rules,
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense
  The pedantry of Courts and schools.
There shall be sung another golden age,
  The rise of Empire and of arts,
The good and great inspiring epic rage
  The wisest heads and noblest hearts.
Not such as Europe breeds in her decay,
  Such as she bred when fresh and young,
When heavenly flame did animate her clay,
  By future poets shall be sung.
Westward the course of Empire takes its way,
  The four first acts already past,
A fifth shall close the drama with the day,
  The world's great effort is the last.

With this project fermenting in his breast, he crossed over to London from Ireland in 1724, carrying a whimsical letter of recommendation from Swift to Lord Carteret — from Swift, again standing behind him like a beneficent shadow, the last man in the world to be taken in by these dreams of natural innocence. At first everything seemed to fall his way. He succeeded in raising considerable private subscriptions, and Parlia-

ment voted him a grant of £20,000. Accordingly, in high hopes, with a newly wedded wife and several friends, he set sail, September 4, 1728, to follow his westward star. They made land at a Virginia port, and from there sailed to Newport, Rhode Island, where his arrival was thus noted in the *New England Weekly Journal:* "He is a gentleman of middle stature, of an agreeable, pleasant and erect aspect. He was ushered into town with a great number of gentlemen, to whom he behaved himself after a very complaisant manner. 'T is said he purposes to tarry herewith with his family about three months."

Instead of three months Berkeley remained in Rhode Island for some three years, residing for a time with the rector of Trinity Church in Newport, and then buying an estate in a valley about three miles out of town and building for himself a house which, in good Tory spirit, he named Whitehall. The scheme languished. Parliament, under the close fist of Walpole, refused the promised grant of money; partisans grew cold; possibly even Berkeley himself began to see the incongruities of the project. Mr. Rand prints a letter from William Byrd of Virginia to Percival, quite the wittiest piece of writing in the volume, which in a few pungent sentences says everything that common-sense could say:

I may venture to say so much to your Lordship, that the Dean is as much a Don Quixote in zeal, as that re-

nowned knight was in chivalry. Is it not a wild undertaking to build a college in a country where there is no bread, nor anything fit for the sustenance of man, but onions and cabbage? Indeed the inhabitants are healthy, but they owe this happiness to a scarcity of everything, which obliges them to a necessary temperance. [Like Berkeley's virtuous natives of Ischia.] . . . Then when this college is built, where will the Dean find Indians to be converted? There are no Indians at Bermudas, nor within two hundred leagues of it upon the continent, and it will need the gift of miracles to persuade them to leave their country and venture themselves upon the great ocean, on the temptation of being converted.

Berkeley, it must be said, was merely the victim of illusions common to the age. Not so many years before his voyage Mrs. Aphra Behn had charmed the cynical ears of Charles II with her tale of *Oroonoko*, in which the Indians represented "an absolute idea of the first state of innocence, before man knew how to sin"; and the island,

> Where Ariel has warbled and Waller has strayed,

had peculiar claims on the imagination of a romantic knight errant —

> Heaven sure has kept this spot of earth uncursed,
> To show how all things were created first.

But if Berkeley accomplished little externally in America, save perhaps the nursing of the seeds of idealism in the minds of Johnson and other well-disposed students, yet for himself the three years of his stay were not lost. Few things are pleasanter in the history of Letters than the mem-

ory of Berkeley meditating on the applications of his divine system in the studious retirement of his valley home, and in the rocky alcove overlooking the sea which tradition still holds sacred to his name. Here his thoughts turned to the tide of deism and atheism which was spreading over England, and to a less extent over this country; and here he composed the seven dialogues of his *Alciphron*, in a more popular vein than his earlier works and with a more practical intention. They are, Fraser observes, with some pardonable exaggeration, "redolent of the fragrance of rural nature in Rhode Island"; preserving in their introductory paragraphs the very scenes amid which they were written. They open with a reference to the miscarriage of Berkeley's great scheme and to the compensations of failure: "A mind at liberty to reflect on its own observations, if it produce nothing useful to the world, seldom fails of entertainment to itself. For several months past I have enjoyed such liberty and leisure in this distant retreat, far beyond the verge of that great whirlpool of business, faction, and pleasure, which is called the world." Then follows the setting of the first conversation, reminding us of nothing so much as of the Ciceronian echoes that come to us from the scenes of Henry More's *Divine Dialogues:*

After dinner we took our walk to Crito's, which lay through half a dozen pleasant fields planted round with

plane trees, that are very common in this part of the country. We walked under the delicious shade of these trees for about an hour before we came to Crito's house, which stands in the middle of a small park, beautified with two fine groves of oak and walnut, and a winding stream of sweet and clear water. We met a servant at the door with a small basket of fruit which he was carrying into a grove, where he said his master was with the two strangers. We found them all three sitting under a shade.

This, according to Fraser, reproduces the situation of Whitehall. The second dialogue carries us to Berkeley's alcove in the rocks:

Next morning, Alciphron and Lysicles said the weather was so fine they had a mind to spend the day abroad, and take a cold dinner under a shade in some pleasant part of the country. Whereupon, after breakfast, we went down to a beach about half a mile off; where we walked on the smooth sand, with the ocean on one hand, and on the other wild broken rocks, intermixed with shady trees and springs of water, till the sun began to be uneasy. We then withdrew into a hollow glade, between two rocks.

And so Berkeley returned from his wild chase after what Swift had called "life academico-philosophical." His first care in London was to get his *Alciphron* published. Presently honour and retirement came to him together. In January of 1734 he "kissed their Majesty's hands for the Bishopric of Cloyne," and in that remote spot, more secluded from the world than his American Whitehall, he lived in study and benevolence

almost until his death. The chief literary production of these years was that strange mixture of quackery and Platonism called *Siris*, which, starting from the uses of tar-water as a supposed panacea for all bodily ailments, passes to a consideration of the vital spirit of the universe and from that to a mysticism quite different in tone from anything in his earlier books. The Platonism of the book was not much regarded, but tar-water became the popular nostrum of the day, and over its efficacy there grew up a pamphlet warfare which threatened to rival the Bangorian controversy in volume. "May I trouble you to get a little six-penny pamphlet, published by the Bishop of Cloyne, with farther and fuller directions how to make and take tar-water?" — so Lady Hervey writes to a friend from Ickworth-Park in August of 1744, and any one who knows that dearest and loveliest lady of the age will bear a grudge against the Bishop for dosing her with his nauseous drug.

Two letters written from Cloyne I cannot pass by, for the reason that they stand out from all Berkeley's correspondence by virtue of their literary flavour, and give a hint of what may have been lost. The earlier of the two deserves to be compared with Lessing's famous letter on a similar occasion. It reads:

My dear Lord,

I was a man retired from the amusement of politics, visits, and what the world calls pleasure. I had a little

friend, educated always under mine own eye, whose painting delighted me, whose music ravished me, and whose lively, gay spirit was a continual feast. It has pleased God to take him hence. God, I say, in mercy hath deprived me of this pretty, gay plaything. His parts and person, his innocence and piety, his particularly uncommon affection for me, had gained too much upon me. Not content to be fond of him, I was vain of him. I had set my heart too much upon him — more perhaps than I ought to have done upon anything in this world.

Thus much suffer me, in the overflowing of my soul, to say to your Lordship, who, though distant in place, are much nearer to my heart than any of my neighbours.

Adieu, my dear Lord, and believe me, with the utmost esteem and affection, your faithful, humble servant.

The other letter is the last that is preserved from his pen, a deeper expression of the feeling that had led him to describe his retreat in Rhode Island as lying beyond the verge of that great whirlpool which is called the world:

... I wish anything but the gout could fix you among us. But bustle and intrigue and great affairs have and will, as long as you exist on this globe, fix your attention. For my own part, I submit to years and infirmities. My views in this world are mean and narrow: it is a thing in which I have small share, and which ought to give me small concern. I abhor business, and especially to have to do with great persons and great affairs, which I leave to such as you who delight in them and are fit for them. The evening of life I choose to pass in a quiet retreat. Ambitious projects, intrigues and quar-

rels of statesmen, are things I have formerly been amused with; but they now seem to be a vain, fugitive dream. If you thought as I do, we should have more of your company, and you less of the gout. We have not those transports of you castle-hunters; but our lives are calm and serene. We do, however, long to see you open your budget of politics by our fireside. . . .

Only a few months after the date of this letter the writer had set out to fulfil what had been one of the dreams of his life — to enjoy the still air and studious associations of Oxford. It was but for a little while. The family reached Oxford in the early autumn of 1752. They took a house in Holywell Street, near the gardens of New College; and there, on the evening of January 14, 1753, the philosopher died, in perfect peace, a man much loved and honoured.

Of the right of Berkeley to hold a place in the great society of wits, or, as we should say, of his genius as a writer, some intimation has been given in the course of narrating his life. It is not my design to deal with him here as a metaphysician, although in that way, certainly, lies his chief reputation; but his influence and position in literature cannot be fully understood without some knowledge of the source and purpose of his philosophical system, and at these we must take a superficial glance.

Berkeley's early years were passed in what was preëminently an age of science. Great discoveries had been made by Galileo and Harvey and New-

ton and many others, and the astonishment over their magnitude was still in the air. In the Royal Society of London and in the less formal associations of Paris we see the beginning of organized experimental research in what was then called the New or Natural Philosophy, with results already striking and of dazzling promise. And the sway of these achievements was felt far beyond their own proper field. Locke, in his sensational philosophy, leaves space, or extension, and time, and matter lying outside of the mind as virtually incomprehensible entities, and on these the speculative mathematicians had been, and still were, building up hypothetical superstructures high into the dim inane. Heaven forbid that I should pretend to understand these things or rate their practical value, any more than did the non-mathematical world of that day. But the world was filled with the noise of the battles of such doughty antagonists as Hobbes and Wallis or Newton and Leibnitz over their aerial creeds, just as it had listened wonderingly to the clamour of the Schoolmen over their spiritual entities, and it could understand perfectly well what Newton meant when he called science "such an impertinently litigious lady that a man has as good be engaged in lawsuits as have to do with her." And it understood, or thought it understood, what was going on when these high scholars began to connect their hypotheses with the mysteries of religion,

when, for instance, Spinoza identified God with space, or extension, and Descartes found His essence in reason.

And so there came about, particularly in England, a pretty warfare between these makers of hypotheses and the gentlemen of common-sense, the echoes of which are heard all through the literature of the day. It was taken up by the poets, and Butler turned from ridiculing the Puritan pretensions of saintship to jesting over those scientific theorizers who, from the supposed vision of an elephant in their telescope, sought

> To clear the grand hypothesis
> Of th' motion of the earth from this.

Philosophers like Glanvill and Bolingbroke tried to warn thinkers against the slippery ground of hypothetical theorizing in general. Mandeville, from the point of view of a practical and successful physician, wrote a whole book to show the disastrous work of hypotheses in his own branch of science. As this is a subject not often touched on by historians, though of great importance, I shall quote at some length from his *Treatise of the Hypochondriack*. And first of the common practice:

> An Hypothesis when once it is establish'd a little time becomes like a Sovereign, and receives the same homage and respect from its Vassals, as if it was Truth it self: this continues till Experience or Envy discovers a flaw in it.... Then you see all that fought under the

banners of the old Hypothesis bristle up, and every Man of Note amongst them thinks himself personally injured, and in honour obliged to stand by it with his Life and Fortune. . . . This Play is generally continued for a considerable time with a great deal of violence; and I have observ'd as much hatred and animosity between the *Aristotelians* and *Cartesians*, when I was at *Leiden*, as there is now in *London* between *High* Church and *Low*-Church.

In another notable passage Mandeville explains how it is that astronomers (it would be biologists to-day) can quarrel over their hypotheses, which are matters of pure opinion and have no relation to observed facts, while carrying on in unison the practical and profitable work of experimentation. And this is the application to his own field of therapeutics:

A Witty Man that has good Language to express himself, and is tollerably vers'd in the Theory of Physick, may, by the help of a well contriv'd *Hypothesis*, find out probable Causes, floridly account for every Symptom, exactly tell you the Indications that are drawn from them, and build upon them such a rational method of Cure, that even Men of Sense shall applaud, and think him an Oracle in Physick; tho' all this while he knows nothing of the Art it self.

Naturally this contempt for the quarrels over incomprehensible and often inane scientific hypotheses joined with the disgust at the very similar theological controversies to produce a reaction against everything that was in any way

above the more creeping platitudes of common-sense. But here came in a curious twist in the warfare. Most of these men, such as Mandeville and Bolingbroke, who ridiculed the irrational assumptions of science, were themselves fast entangled in the naturalistic tendencies of this same science, and so, in their deeper enmity against the supernaturalism of religion, they laid hold of the very hypotheses which they professed to disdain, and, by presenting these in a language apparently denuded of mystery, set them up in the place of God and Providence. Thus it was that out of such entities as the Cartesian reason and the Spinozistic space there was evolved a kind of rationalistic pantheism which seemed to avoid all the difficulties of revelation. This pantheism may have had its roots far in the past, but it owed its colour and its immediate strength to the imposing achievements of science. The existence of a Deity was not denied by most of these men, but He was identified with a supposedly clear law of nature, and from nature itself was eliminated everything that surpasses the easy comprehension of the mind, as if its ultimate processes were as simple as the rules of addition and subtraction. Especially the notion of real sin and evil, as the insoluble mystery that confronts us wherever we look below the surface of natural events or human passions, was juggled out of the world by neat argument from

the part to the whole, which they learned from the old Stoics, and which is about as convincing, when examined, as if a man should say he felt no toothache to-day because he felt none the whole of last month.

These, then, were the two illegitimate children of lustful science, Hypothesis and Deism. The host of Israel was as terrified at their appearance as if they had been a pair of twin Goliaths; when there came out against them from Dublin a young man armed with a sling and a smooth pebble.

We have seen from Berkeley's Commonplace Book how deeply he was aware of the great enmities his philosophy would arouse, and he is perfectly precise in stating the source of this danger. His attack, on the one hand, is against the infinites and infinitesimals and incommensurables of the "hypothetical gentlemen," and their abstract notions of "extension, existence, power, matter, lines," which he compares, to their detriment, with the theses of the Schoolmen. On the other hand are the "profane," who believe in an "extended Deity" and hide their rationalism, or plain atheism, under the cover of empty words. His first published works were to be directed mainly, but not at all exclusively, against the former; later, and particularly in the *Alciphron*, he laid himself out against the more open foes of religion. But there is no real divergence, and, in truth, the whole substance of his counter-

philosophy is contained in two brief entries of his Commonplace Book, written, as we have seen, when he was little more than a boy:

> We cannot possibly conceive any active power but the Will.
>
> Nothing properly but Persons, i.e. conscious things, do exist. All other things are not so much existences as manners of the existence of persons.

To clear the way for this principle he first undertook to prove that the so-called primary qualities of material objects, such as figure and extension and motion, have no more proper existence outside of the mind of the percipient than do colours, sounds, heat, cold, and such like secondary qualities. In other words, our notion of matter as a substance underlying all our sensations of sight and sound and feeling, and causing those sensations while itself in its absolute nature escaping perception, is an empty, unmeaning illusion. There is no matter, nor any impersonal force whatsoever. There is nothing in *rerum natura* but these two things: personality, consisting of will and mind together; and ideas, as Berkeley calls the images of perception. The will when active creates ideas for its own mind; when passive it receives into its mind the ideas created by some other will. The theory is summed up thus in the *Principles of Human Knowledge:*

> I find I can excite ideas [that is images as if of things seen] in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the

scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy; and by the same power it is obliterated and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of ideas doth very properly denominate the mind active. Thus much is certain and grounded on experience; but when we think of unthinking agents or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse ourselves with words.

But, whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by Sense have not a like dependence on my will. When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so likewise as to the hearing and other senses; the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. There is therefore some *other* Will or Spirit that produces them.

The ideas of Sense [*i.e.*, the images in our mind without our own volition] are more strong, lively, and distinct than those of the imagination [*i.e.*, those subject to our own volition]; they have likewise a steadiness, order, and coherence, and are not excited at random, as those which are the effects of human wills often are, but in a regular train or series, the admirable connection whereof sufficiently testifies the wisdom and benevolence of its Author. Now the set rules or established methods wherein the Mind we depend on excites in us the ideas of sense, are called the *laws of nature;* and these we learn by experience, which teaches us that such and such ideas are attended with such and such other ideas, in the ordinary course of things.

So at once Berkeley thought to thrust away those hypothetical mysteries evolved out of matter by the men of science, and to bring back the

thoughtless from a vague Deity lost in the law of nature to a very personal God, from whose gracious will flow all those ideas in the minds of men which make up for them the seemingly independent world. In place of the mechanically operating efficient cause which alone the Spinozists admitted, he proclaimed once more the existence of a great final cause, thus leading men to look for the purpose rather than the mere facts of life.

Undoubtedly there is profit in such a philosophy as well as beauty; but it involves difficulties, some of which Berkeley foresaw and some of which he did not foresee. If the world is only the ideas emanating from the mind of a personal creator, what of evil? Berkeley shirked that problem by repeating the theory of the Stoics and Deists, according to which imperfection is necessary in the members of a perfect design. And what of the individual human wills and their power of creating ideas? What is their relation to the supreme Creator? Berkeley wavered here, though inclining to a dogmatic statement of free will. It remained for his successor, Jonathan Edwards, to carry his system to its logical conclusion, and to make God frankly the cause of the human will and its ideas.

These are perhaps contingent difficulties, but there is an objection that goes to the very heart of the philosophy. Every one knows how Dr. Johnson, not Berkeley's friend of America, but

the Major Bear of London, sought to destroy idealism and prove the existence of matter by kicking a stone. Well, in one sense that may seem no argument at all. Berkeley was the last man in the world to deny the reality of the objects of sense; he even thought his philosophy made them more real by removing their cause from the realm of incomprehensible hypothesis. The sensation we have when we kick a stone was a fact, and denoted a cause lying outside of our mind, just as clearly to him as to any man in the street; the only difference was that he called this cause the immediate will of God rather than some intangible, unknowable substratum of "matter." But the deeper objection implied in Johnson's act he did not, and could not, answer. That implication is that we are as immediately and as certainly conscious of some impersonal force in the world as we are of our own personality — whether we call it "matter," or give it some other unmeaning name, is of minor consequence, so long as we do not belie our consciousness by regarding it as a personality. That we do not know this force in the same way that we know ideas, is nothing to the point; neither, as Berkeley admits, do we know of the existence of our own will and mind in that way. At least the whole question resolves itself into the truth or untruth of Berkeley's initial intuition: "Nothing properly but Persons, *i.e.*, conscious things, do exist."

Whether we accept or reject that intuition, Berkeley's system remains one of the great influences not only in metaphysics, but in the wider field of thought which we call literature. He was in many respects, notably in the restraint and measure of his language, very much a man of his age and of the neo-classical school that ruled it; but there burned within him, nevertheless, an enthusiasm belonging to a different school altogether, and linking him with that hidden spirit which all through the eighteenth century was preparing for the revolution of the nineteenth. In this respect Berkeley belongs with Shaftesbury, and though, apparently, Shaftesbury's influence was the greater, there is in Berkeley's philosophy something which enters even more intimately than his into the very heart of the movement in its final development — indeed, Shaftesbury was one of the writers particularly attacked in the *Alciphron*. A few lines from this dialogue, put into the mouth of a wavering deist, will help to indicate the likeness and the difference of the two men:

I hold the confused notion of a Deity, or some invisible power, to be of all prejudices the most unconquerable. When half a dozen ingenious men are got together over a glass of wine, by a cheerful fire, in a room well lighted, we banish with ease all the spectres of fancy or education, and are very clear in our decisions. But, as I was taking a solitary walk before it was broad day-light in yonder grove, methought the point was not quite so

clear; nor could I readily recollect the force of those arguments, which used to appear so conclusive at other times. I had I know not what awe upon my mind, and seemed haunted by a sort of panic, which I cannot otherwise account for than by supposing it the effect of prejudice: for you must know that I, like the rest of the world, was once upon a time catechised and tutored into the belief of a God or Spirit.

Now, superficially, such a passage as this seems to be quite in the vein of Shaftesbury and the other sentimental naturalists of the day, and indeed I would not exaggerate the distinctive note. Yet there is, nevertheless, a certain pungency in Berkeley's language, together with the logical acumen, which points to a deeper lapse than Shaftesbury's into the "pathetic fallacy" of feeling one's self into the moods of nature, a fallacy never far from the heart of man, but in its excess one of the sure marks of the coming romanticism. What the sentimentalists had only felt, Berkeley had reasoned out metaphysically. By dissolving the outer world into personality, and by depriving phenomena of their objective material reality, his logic did more than any other writing of the day to break down the distinction between the law of man and the law of things. In his attempt to spiritualize nature he was really preparing the way for the conversion of naturalism into a bastard sort of spirituality. So it is that Berkeley's metaphysical thesis seems to me to reach through the

years, and to connect itself with the later literary revolt against rationalistic compression on the one side, and against the truer inhibitions of religion on the other side, in favour of the free, oftened unbridled, expansion of the emotions and what else we regard as the elements of personality.

A DUKE AMONG THE WITS

A DUKE AMONG THE WITS

To those who admitted an acquaintance with the wits of Queen Anne and her successor, the Duke of Wharton was always a portentous but rather dubious figure. An idea of the man had, indeed, been fixed in their minds once for all by one of Pope's terrible portraits:

Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days,
Whose ruling passion was the lust of praise:
Born with whate'er could win it from the wise,
Women and fools must like him, or he dies:
Though wond'ring senates hung on all he spoke,
The club must hail him master of the joke. . . .
Thus with each gift of nature and of art,
And wanting nothing but an honest heart;
Grown all to all; from no one vice exempt;
And most contemptible to shun contempt;
His passion still, to covet gen'ral praise;
His life, to forfeit it a thousand ways;
A constant bounty which no friend has made;
An angel tongue, which no man can persuade;
A fool, with more of wit than half mankind;
Too rash for thought, for action too refined;
A tyrant to the wife his heart approves;
A rebel to the very king he loves;
He dies, sad outcast of each church and state,
And, harder still! flagitious, yet not great.
Ask you why Wharton broke through ev'ry rule?
'T was all for fear the knaves should call him fool.

That is a portrait done in everlasting encaustic; but the question might arise whether the limner drew from life or from a fancy of his own fertile and malignant brain. We needed the confirmation of history, and this at last has come to us. In a memoir published in 1896, Mr. J. R. Robinson gave an interesting sketch of Wharton's career, which, so far as it went, confirmed Pope's satire, and now the busy pen of Mr. Lewis Melville has supplemented that work with a fuller narrative containing a number of hitherto unpublished letters.[1] It is the habit of Mr. Melville to be somewhat lenient to the subject he has in hand, but, however Pope may have deepened the shadows, it still appears that no essay, and indeed no biography, of Wharton can do much more than offer a running commentary on the traits we knew from the beginning.

If any man of that age exemplified by his actions the current philosophy of the ruling passion, it was His Grace of Wharton. And whether that passion displayed itself as the vanity of a man of no character to win honour in the game of politics, difficult always, doubly difficult in those days, or as the itching of a high-born nobleman to shine in the still more deadly battle of the wits, it was all, as Pope said, for fear the knaves should call him fool.

[1] *The Life and Writings of Philip Duke of Wharton.* By Lewis Melville. New York: John Lane Company. 1913.

As for his lack of character, he came to that by special inheritance as well as by the general dissoluteness of the period. Of an ancient family, his grandfather, Philip, fourth Baron Wharton (1613–96), distinguished as "the good Lord Wharton," was able in the troubled years of the Rebellion to side with the popular cause, yet honourably to oppose the execution of the King and the usurpation of Cromwell. He succeeded also in combining great personal beauty and lavish display with the strict principles of a Covenanter. Philip's son Thomas (1648–1715), fifth Baron and first Marquis, went further in the treacherous art of contraries, being at once an incorruptible politician in the party of the Revolution and in private life a notorious rake. It could be said of him, apparently with truth,

> Nor bribes nor threat'nings could his zeal abate,
> To serve his country, and avert her fate.

Yet for his religion, he was well described by Swift as "an atheist grafted on a dissenter," while Harry Killegrew, one of Charles the Second's masters of ribaldry, could say to him, "You would not swear at that rate, if you thought you were doing God honour." And for his morals, Shaftesbury, an honest and fairly trustworthy reporter, summed them up in a few words: "If I ever expected any public good where virtue was wholly sunk, 't was in his character: the most mysterious

of any in my account, for this reason. But I have seen many proofs of this monstrous compound in him, of the very worst and best." The Marquis came into association with the later circle of wits by taking Addison with him as his private secretary when he went over to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant. He was himself the author of that extraordinary bit of anti-papistical doggerel, the "Lillibullero," which, according to Burnet, had more political effect than the Philippics of Demosthenes and Cicero, and which my Uncle Toby, long after the battle of Namur, used to whistle to himself to keep up his courage.

Of this stock, diminishing in character by generations and increasing in *hybris*, our illustrious scamp was born, in the year 1698. Whatever else he lacked in training and inheritance, he was from the first prepared to exact the wonder of senates. "His father's care," according to a contemporary biographer, "was to form him a complete orator"; and to this end the lad was put into the hands of tutors who drilled him in literature and elocution. But not for long. At the age of sixteen he eloped with a girl, said to have been "without either family or fortune," and was married in the Fleet. That he was tyrant to his wife, we have no other witness than Pope; but at least he soon abandoned her, and contrived to amuse himself without her for years. Six weeks after the marriage his father died, and the young Marquis, handsome, witty,

but not wise, was left with no curb to his "unbridled excursions" save the hand of his guardians on the purse.

Very soon the boy was sent over to Geneva, with a Huguenot tutor, to study at a religious institution. Naturally he rebelled. He stopped long enough at Paris on the way to get into all kinds of mischief, and thither he escaped again, after a short experience of Swiss discipline, leaving with his tutor his Byronic pet and this not less Byronic note of farewell: "Being no longer able to bear with your ill-usage I think proper to be gone from you. However, that you may not want company, I have left you the bear, as the most sociable companion in the world that could be picked out for you." In Paris the truant gave himself up to reckless humour and Stuart politics. We first hear of him associating with a Mr. Gwynn, whom he meets at an English coffee-house, and the next day visits in a chamber up many stairs. "Sure, I hope this is not the way to heaven, for if it is I'll run down stairs again," exclaims our budding wit. Gwynn was apparently abroad for the good of his country, and, with or without his help, the young scion of the Revolution and nursling of Whiggery is soon deeply engaged in the plots to bring James III back to his throne.

And so began the crooked search to obtain general praise in the medley of politics. The boy's beginnings were fair, and he seems to have been

introduced immediately into the heart of those wild intrigues which were hatching at Paris and Avignon and which had already driven Bolingbroke from the party. From the Stuart Papers Mr. Melville has printed a number of Wharton's letters which show a surprising grasp of affairs in one so young, particularly a note to the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, dated November 4, 1716, when our statesman was only eighteen years old. But no necessity of State could keep his tongue from wagging folly and his brain from plotting dangerous jokes. Only two days after the sober epistle to the Landgrave, the Earl of Southesk is writing to Mar, complaining that unless some one can restrain the young man's loose talk he will ruin himself to no purpose. And in the same month we get this account of him from a correspondent unnamed:

> . . . Lord Wharton was at Lord Stair's on young Geordie's birthday. He proposed to drink confusion to the Tories, and that Liddesdale and Gardener would go to the Coffee-house and he and they would do as much there. When they came there he cried, Here is confusion to the Whigs! What do you mean, my Lord? say they. God damn you, says he; do you know I brought you here to get your heads broke? the Tories are too many for you here to drink any other health.

From such perils and plots his guardians delivered him for the time by cutting off his supplies and forcing him to return to England. He

had lived lavishly and borrowed recklessly, even inducing the hard-pressed widow of James II to lend him £2000. "I have pawned my principles," he said to a friend at home, "to Gordon, the Pretender's banker, for a considerable sum, and till I can repay him, I must be a Jacobite. When that is done, I will return to the Whigs." What his politics really were at this time, if he had any politics beyond the desire to be doing something, it would be hard to say. In December of 1716 he is writing to the Earl of Mar that he is ready with twenty men to proclaim James in Cheapside; a few months later he has taken his place in the Irish House of Lords at Dublin, and is doing good service for the Government. There is nothing peculiar in this. Most of the politicians of the age were trying to keep the peace with one king while serving the other; but they showed a certain discretion in their duplicity, whereas this young scapegrace had not even the conscience of concealment. One guesses that his real sympathies were with the king over the water, as was the prevailing fashion, for good reasons, among the greater wits of the day, but that the consciousness of talent and the craving for applause tempted him often, though not always, to play a part with the dominant, practical party. At any rate, as a reward for his loyalty in Ireland the Government, on January 18, 1718, while he was still a minor, created him Duke of Wharton — an extraordi-

nary honour. On February 18 the news is that "the Duke of Wharton has changed his side," and is voting with the other party.

While in Ireland he met the exiled despot of the wits, who preached him a better sermon than most of those he spoke from the pulpit. "You have had some capital frolics, my Lord," Dean Swift is reported to have said to the bragging youth, "and let me recommend one to you. Take a frolic to be virtuous: take my word for it, that one will do you more honour than all the other frolics of your life." Whether the advice fell on heeding ears may be doubted, but, for some reason, on returning to England the Duke seems to have made a modest experiment in virtue. He fell "into the conversation of the sober part of mankind," wrote Mrs. Eliza Haywood, "and began to think there were comforts in retirement." And Lady Mary Wortley Montagu tells her sister that "the Duke of Wharton has brought his Duchess to town, and is fond of her to distraction; in order to break the hearts of all the other women that have any claim upon his. . . . He has public devotions twice a day, and assists at them with exemplary devotion; and there is nothing pleasanter than the remarks of some pious ladies on the conversion of so great a sinner." But the Duke was soon sinning again, if indeed he had ever stopped. His wife was bundled off to the country; he joined the Hell-Fire Club, which, as Mr. Mel-

ville thinks, may not have been as bad as its name, but was certainly bad enough; he played atrocious pranks, one of which sent a foolish dwarf to the madhouse; he drank furiously. Dr. Young is supposed to have lectured him under the name of Lorenzo:

> Thou, to whom midnight is immoral noon;
> And the sun's noontide blaze, prim dawn of day;
> Not by thy climate, but capricious crime,
> Commencing one of our antipodes!

Meanwhile, in 1719, whether as saint or sinner, he had been introduced into the House of Lords, where he soon proved his precocious powers of oratory. There, as president of the Hell-Fire Club, he opposed a Bill for preventing blasphemy and profaneness, on the ground that such a law would be repugnant to Scripture! At the end of the year 1721 he was kissing the King's hand as a good Whig. Then again, in May of 1723, he was speaking in defence of that prime Tory, Bishop Atterbury, against the Bill of Pains and Penalties. Horace Walpole, in his *Royal and Noble Authors*, says that in the evening before the debate Wharton went to Sir Robert at Chelsea, avowed contrition for his opposition to the Court, and consulted with the Minister on the best way of aiding the Bill. Having thus got full information in regard to the case, he spent the rest of the night carousing, and the next morning, without having

gone to bed, made his great speech in the House of Lords against the Government. Mr. Melville rightly observes that the anecdote, whether true or not, is quite in keeping with the Duke's character; but it can scarcely be true. Sir Robert was not one to be caught by such a trick, and Sergeant Wynne, who was concerned in the case, pronounced the story incredible. It is easier to accept Mr. Melville's eulogy of Wharton as an orator on this occasion: "With a wonderful grasp of detail and a stern logic, he summed up the evidence against Atterbury, and disposed of it, in a quiet, forcible, closely-reasoned manner that suggests the great lawyer rather than the distinguished orator." Yet here again Mr. Melville goes a little too far. It is an exaggeration to say that by virtue of this speech "the Duke takes a position among the great men of his day." His argument, no doubt, shows a keen grasp of details; but it lacks something more than oratorical manner, it lacks also the persuasiveness of Atterbury's own speech on the occasion. And naturally it failed of effect; for Walpole knew, and Parliament knew, and we know, and probably Wharton himself knew, that the Bishop had been engaged in treasonable correspondence with James. The Bishop went over to France — "exchanged" for Bolingbroke, as he said, being himself one of the brotherhood of wits — and the Duke consoled himself by inditing an ode "On

the Banishment of Cicero," in the Ercles vein suitable to such an occasion:

Thy Wisdom was thy only Guilt,
  Thy Virtue thy Offence,
With Godlike Zeal thou didst espouse
  Thy Country's just Defence:
Nor sordid Hopes could charm thy steady Soul,
Nor fears, nor Guilty Numbers could controul.

What tho' the Noblest Patriots stood
  Firm to thy sacred Cause,
What tho' Thou could'st display the Force
  Of Rhet'ric and of Laws;
No Eloquence, no Reason could repel
Th' united Strength of CLODIUS and of Hell.

The Duke was not long in following the Bishop, in politics if not in virtue. In a "memorial" to the Court at Vienna he made the treatment of Atterbury an excuse for abandoning the Hanoverian cause, but Mr. Melville is probably right in surmising that the itch for high position which he could not obtain from the Government at home, sent him back to the Pretender. Like Lorenzo of the poem —

Denied the public eye, the public's voice,
As if he lived on other's breath, he dies.
Fain would he make the world his pedestal;
Mankind the gazers, the sole figure he.

However that may be, leaving his noble name to the scandal-mongers of England — who, if we may believe Horace Walpole, did not miss their

opportunity — he crossed the Channel in July of 1725, and was immediately deep in the Jacobite counsels. "Venisti tandem?" exclaimed Atterbury, in a set of Latin verses which do more credit to his knowledge of the Gradus than to his discernment of men —

> Admiranda tibi haud levium spectacula rerum
> Evolvam laetus, totiusque ordine gentis
> Consilia, et studia, et mores, et praelia dicam,
> Et quo quemque modo fugiasque ferasque laborem.

For a while he takes an important part in that futile weaving of plots which the Jacobites were carrying on all over Europe. At first he is at the Court of Austria, where he accomplishes nothing, through no fault of his own, it may be. Then he is in Spain, where he accomplishes less than nothing. Both friends and enemies were beginning to find him out by this time and to regard him as the Miles Gloriosus of politics. A letter from Benjamin Keene, then British Consul at Madrid, tells the sad story in unmistakable language:

> . . . On Tuesday last, I had some company with me that the Dukes of Liria and Wharton wanted to speak with; upon which they came directly into the room. Wharton made his compliments and placed himself by me. I did not think myself obliged to turn out his star and garter [given him by James]; because, as he is an everlasting talker and tippler, in all probability he would lavish out something that might be of use to know. . . . He declared himself the Pretender's Prime Minister, and Duke of Wharton and Northumberland.

Hitherto (says he) my master's interest has been managed by the Duchess of Perth and three or four other old women who meet under the portal of St. Germains; he wanted a Whig, and a brisk one, to put them in the right train, and I am the man; you may now look upon me as Sir Philip Wharton, Knight of the Garter, and Sir Robert Walpole, Knight of the Bath, running a course, and, by God, he shall be hard pressed;. . . neither he nor King George shall be six months at ease, as long as I have the honour to serve in the employ I am in.

It is not strange that "the other old women" soon had him excluded from what they were pleased to regard as the secrets of their conspiracy, though the "Knight of the Bath" probably knew more of what was really happening than any one of them. Whereupon our Gloriosus must turn soldier indeed —

Est genus hominum qui esse primos se omnium rerum volunt
Nec sunt.

In 1727 the Spaniards made an attempt to recover Gibraltar, and the Duke obtained permission to serve with the besieging army. The attack was futile, but Wharton at least showed that he was no coward. On one occasion, inspired by brandy, and decked out in his Garter-Ribbon, he went up to an English battery and challenged it by crying out, "Long live the Pretender," and using other "bad language." He was warned to retire, but kept up his posture until struck by a piece of a shell on the toe. So much glory he won,

and then, being weary of camp life, returned to Madrid.

Meanwhile he had changed his religion and had married again. In Madrid he became acquainted with the daughter of an Irish exile who was one of the Maids of Honour to the Spanish Queen. As she was a Catholic, the Duke promptly went over to her religion. On June 17, 1726, we know from a document of the Inquisition that he was firm in his adherence to the Anglican faith; by July 26 he was converted and had his bride. Two years later, hoping to curry favour in England, he was swearing to Atterbury that he was no Catholic — "We might as well think he was a Turk." But when he found his denial of no avail, "he made another sudden turn, and is now as true a Catholic and Jacobite as ever he was." He was no longer taken seriously by the statesmen at home, but the wits had not forgotten him. Mr. Melville quotes an amusing ballad, by Curll, *On the Duke of Wharton's Renouncing the Protestant Religion:*

Pray is n't it queer
That a wild Peer,
    So known for rakish Tricks,
That *Wharton* shou'd
At last be Good,
    And kiss a *Crucifix?*
. . . . . .
Old *Thomas* rise,
And if you've Eyes
    To light you thro' the Shades,

See, see your Son
How he has run
From Beggary to Beads!
. . . . . .
He took the Lass
As he took to Mass,
All in an errant Whim,
And did dispence
With Marriage-pence
As she dispenc'd with Him.

The rest is the fifth act of the tragedy. Rejected by the Whigs at home and the Jacobites abroad, without money save what he could beg or borrow, sinking deeper and deeper in the habit of drunkenness, with broken health, he throws away the remainder of his life in reckless and profane debauchery. He could impose occasionally on a gullible traveller, and from one such repentant Englishman we have a terrible picture of him as he was living in Paris in 1729:

In short, he left me sick, in Debt, and without a Penny; but as I begin to recover, and have a little Time to think, I can't help considering myself, as one whisk'd up behind a Witch upon a Broomstick, and hurried over Mountains and Dales, through confus'd Woods and thorny Thickets, and when the Charm is ended, and the poor Wretch dropp'd in a Desart, he can give no other account of his enchanted Travels, but that he is much fatigued in Body and Mind, his Cloaths torn, and worse in all other Circumstances, without being of the least Service to himself or any body else.

Evidently some of the old brilliance which had

dazzled England in his youth remained with him almost to the end — the magic audacity of his wit. The end itself was pathetic. While going to rejoin his regiment at Terragona he was struck down by fatal illness, and died in the Franciscan Monastery of Poblet, in the habit of the order, with no one near him save the pitying Fathers. He was not yet thirty-three years old. According to the inscription on the stone set up in the abbey, he met death IN FIDE ECCLESIÆ CATHOLICÆ ROMANÆ, but his old companions at home read another epitaph. In 1733 appeared the *Epistle* which now stands first in the *Moral Essays* of Pope, and there, in that corner of what may be called England's Abbey of the Unwise, his effigies have a conspicuous place among those who fell as victims of the Ruling Passion:

> Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days.

But it is not for his crooked politics and religion that we remember Wharton now. The wandering Court of James knew too many of his kind to allow him any distinction in these things. He is remembered rather as a Lord among the wits and for his few years at Twickenham. And what, we ask, had he to do in that galley?

Now, the wits were not a new folk. Their progenitors had come up to London from the theatres in the days of Queen Elizabeth, attracted thither by the play-houses, and bringing with them a

plentiful baggage of genius with a small portion of learning. How they lived, and roystered, and peopled English literature with their visionary creations, we know from the stories of Marlowe and Greene and their fellows. The later drama found its material in their descendants, the merry rogues who used their "understanding, travel, reading, wit," as money in the purse for buying the joys of the town. "Means?" exclaims one of Fletcher's delightful rascals; "why all good men's my means. My wit's my plow, the town's my stock, tavern's my standing-house, and all the world knows there's no want. All gentlemen that love society, love me; all purses that wit and pleasure opens, are my tenants; every man's clothes fit me." And the genius of the dramatist was like the life of his hero; it was not "wit without money," but it was without principle and without rule save the law of abundant, irresistible vitality:

> As I do love the man that lives by his wits,
> He comes so near my nature.

The tradition was carried on by the writers of the Restoration, but with a difference. The new wits fall into two pretty well-defined classes, united, however, by the irresponsibility and immorality which they inherit in common from their ancestors. In the one class are the initiates of the court, who employ their genius, not, as Fletcher did, in

the service of a rollicking, full-blooded life and indiscriminate emotions, but for the creation of a world of artificial exclusions. Here every jest is an intended rapier-thrust at the conventions of respectable society, laughter is a sneer, and pity a miracle. These men refined the licence of Fletcher into a philosophy of licentiousness. In the other class were those who wallowed in what Swift called the "thick sediment of slime and mud" at the bottom of Helicon; the scurrilous creatures of whom it was said by the "facetious" Tom Brown, their proper spokesman: "Our wit, generally speaking, is debauched." These men did not stab virtue, but merely bespattered it. Reading Tom Brown and his like, one gets the notion that wit is a convention in which scandal, drunkenness, and lechery take the place of faith, hope, and charity — but the greatest of these is scandal. He and his fellows introduced one element at least which was to be almost constant with the followers of the new school — "the faithful attendant of wit, ill-nature," as Walpole named it, echoing the sentiment of Butler, that "there is nothing that provokes and sharpens wit like malice."

In the case of a man like Brown this ill-nature was a mere wantonness; he belonged to the diseased beings who were afterwards described by a writer in the *Grub-Street* journal: "The morsure of these worms, which we call Wit-worms, are much of the nature of the biting of mad dogs:

which makes the afflicted follow their noses directly, and snap at every body they meet." There was something else needed to give this malice the true ring of the wit of Twickenham, something which had already been brought to the devil's brew by contemporaries of Fletcher who had not genius enough to preserve their names in literature. In the preface to the collected edition of the *Memoirs of the Society of Grub-Street* it is said that the original members of that fraternity were a set of writers, "who, for the cheapness and obscurity of lodgings, resided in Grub-Street, in the seditious times of King Charles I, and from their garrets and cellars dispersed those false reports and reasonings which were very instrumental in stirring up the people at last to a rebellion." So important was this ingredient of politics that these "Grubeans," despite the oblivion that has overtaken most of them, have some claim to be regarded as the true begetters of wit, as the word came to be used with a very specific meaning. But they did not long maintain their monopoly. It was Butler who turned the tables with a vengeance against the rebels of Church and State, transmuting politics into literature. But the author of *Hudibras*, if not a rebel, was ribald, and there were some honest folk who sighed to see all the wit of the world running atilt from every angle against the decencies of life. So, in one of his sermons, *Against Foolish Talking and Jesting* — it is

really a delightful literary essay — we find Barrow calling on the men of virtue to take possession of the "lepid way":

> It is wit that wageth the war against reason, against virtue, against religion; wit alone it is that perverteth so many, and so greatly corrupteth the world: it may therefore be needful, in our warfare for those dearest concerns, to sort the manner of our fighting with that of our adversaries, and with the same kind of arms to protect goodness whereby they do assail it. If wit may happily serve under the banner of truth and virtue, we may impress it for that service; and good it were to rescue so worthy a faculty from so vile abuse.

The lesson was heeded. Presently came my Lord Shaftesbury, who would purge wit of its grosser humours and elevate it into an elegant philosophy. Henceforth laughter was to be your only syllogism, and the ability to endure ridicule was to be the supreme test of truth and virtue. So far Barrow might have followed the fulfilment of his prayer, with dubitation, perhaps, yet without indignation. But the criterion was to be applied also to enthusiasms and to any departure from the calm self-sufficiency of gentility, with results which would have disgusted Barrow as much as they did actually alarm the later opponents of a genteel Deism, from John Leland and Thomas Brown (not the scurrilous "Tom") and Dr. Warburton down to Cardinal Newman. It may be worth while to stop long enough to read

a few sentences from Leland's criticism of Shaftesbury, written when the war of the wits was pretty well over, and time had come to take account of the dead and dying. His words have considerable historical interest, and are, indeed, not without some meaning for those of us to-day who like to make "humour" the test of all virtues in life and literature:

He not only expressly calls ridicule a *test*, and a *criterion of truth*, but declares for applying it to every thing, and in all cases. . . . And though he doth not approve the seeking to *raise a laugh for every thing*, yet he thinks it right to *seek in every thing what justly may be laughed at.* He declares, that "he hardly cares so much as to think on the subject of religion, much less to write on it, without endeavouring to put himself in as good humour as possible," *i. e.* treating it, as he himself expresses it, in a way of *wit* and *raillery, pleasantry* and *mirth*. . . .

The best and wisest men in all ages have always recommended a calm attention and sobriety of mind, a cool and impartial examination and inquiry, as the properest disposition for finding out truth and judging concerning it. But according to his Lordship's representation of the case, those that apply themselves to the searching out truth, or judging what is really true, serious and excellent, must endeavor to put themselves in a merry humour, to raise up a gayety of spirit, and seek whether in the object they are examining they cannot find out *something that may be justly laughed at.* And it is great odds, that a man who is thus disposed will find out something fit, as he imagines, to excite his mirth, in the most serious and important subject in the world. Such a temper is so far from being an help to a fair and unprejudiced inquiry, that it is one of the greatest hindrances to it.

A strong turn to ridicule hath a tendency to disqualify a man for cool and sedate reflection, and to render him impatient of the pains that is necessary to a rational and deliberate search.

Such were the elements which entered into the dizzy game of wit when stout Queen Anne gave her name to English literature. It was a field of battle — a kind of general tournament, like the "gentle and joyous passage of arms of Ashby," described by Scott in *Ivanhoe*, wherein the combatants were divided into two main parties, but in such a way as to leave each knight pretty free to follow his own personal feud. Now, politics seemed to make the grand division in the Battle of the Books, when Whig and Tory joined in a mighty *mêlée;* but at other times politics were lost to sight in the natural antipathy of genius and dulness, or even of virtue and vice. And at the end reputations lay dead and dying about the trenches at Twickenham like the bodies on any well-fought *champ de bataille*. What carried such a man as Wharton, a Peer of the realm, to whom a great career in Parliament was open, into this medley? Well, mere idleness and force of imitation, in large part. "If it were not for a rainy day," says Swift, "a drunken vigil, a fit of the spleen, a course of physic, a sleepy Sunday, an ill run at dice, a long tailor's bill, a beggar's purse, a factious head, a hot sun, costive diet, want of books, and a just contempt of learning — but for these

events, I say, and some others too long to recite (especially a prudent neglect of taking brimstone inwardly) I doubt, the number of authors and of writers would dwindle away to a degree most woful to behold." Most of these causes were magnificently operative with the Duke of Wharton, and he had also as mad a lust of praise as any of "great Cibber's brazen brainless brothers."

He had commenced author, to use the contemporary idiom, at a tender age, and had continued on occasion to indite lampoons and ballads which, for the most part, are rather above the average scribbling of the day. One of his ballads, which Mr. Melville signalizes as his "most noteworthy literary composition," is in fact a capital piece of fun, as may be guessed from the opening and closing stanzas:

God prosper long from being broke
The Luck of Eden-Hall;[1]
A doleful drinking-bout I sing,
There lately did befall.

To chase the spleen with cup and can
Duke Philip took his way,
Babes yet unborn shall never see
The like of such a day.

The stout and ever-thirsty duke
A vow to God did make

[1] Referring to a famous cup at the home of his cousin Sir Christopher Musgrave, the breaking of which was to foretell the fall of the house.

His pleasure within Cumberland
Three live-long nights to take.
. . . . . .
Thus did this dire contention end;
And each man of the slain
Were quickly carried off to bed,
Their senses to regain.

God bless the King, the duchess fat,
And keep the land in peace;
And grant that drunkenness henceforth
'Mong noblemen may cease.

And likewise bless our royal prince,
The nation's other hope;
And give us grace for to defy
The Devil and the Pope.

Wharton had also played his part as patron, notably in the case of Young, who repaid the generosity by cancelling a fulsome dedication when his benefactor was an exile and by preaching the morals of the *Night Thoughts* at him. Such was the Duke's "constant bounty which no friend has made." It is something in the annals of literature to have furnished the model for Young's Lorenzo — not to mention Richardson's Lovelace, if we may believe Anna Seward.

It was something also to have associated his name with the select band who were fighting the battle against dulness from the headquarters of Pope and Mary Wortley Montagu at Twickenham, and who by their genius raised wit to be

one of the triumphs of our literature, as, at its worst, it is one of the disgraces. In 1722 Wharton leased "The Grove," which lay about a quarter of a mile from Pope's villa, and here he made his home until he left England never to return. In these years he entered the arena definitely as a political pamphleteer by managing and in part writing the *True Briton*, a semi-weekly journal, which purposed ostensibly "to animate every honest mind to lay aside those Party Resentments, which, in time, must end in the Ruin of this Island," but which seemed to the Government so far from impartiality that they suppressed it after the seventy-fourth issue. Now, too, he appears to have been most furiously engaged in the social contest. And with what desperate earnestness the game was played we may gather from a chance remark of Horace Walpole's on Lady Stafford, who, as daughter of the Comte de Grammont and "La Belle Hamilton," was by birth an heiress of the world's wit. "She used to live at Twickenham when Mary Wortley and the Duke of Wharton lived there too," he writes; "she had more wit than both of them. What would I give to have had Strawberry Hill twenty years ago? — I think anything but twenty years. Lady Stafford used to say to her sister, 'Well, child, I have come without my wit to-day'; that is, she had not taken her opium, which she was forced to do if she had any appointment to be in particular spirits."

Naturally the Duke's activities in this noble sport were not pent up in a country village, and, in February, 1724, Lady Mary, sending the news of London to her sister, tells of a band of "twenty very pretty fellows" who called themselves the "Schemers," and met regularly three times a week to consult with Wharton as a "committee of gallantry." "'T is true," she adds, "they have the envy and curses of the old and ugly of both sexes, and a general persecution from all old women; but this is no more than all reformations must expect in their beginning." But Twickenham was the centre of the hottest fighting, and Lady Mary had good reason for knowing the Duke's prowess as a "Schemer." It was even hinted that hers was the attraction that lured him thither, and Lady Mary herself declared that Pope's jealousy of Wharton was the cause of her quarrel with the wicked wasp. Whether that charge is true or not—probably literary intrigue had more to do with the quarrel than amatory jealousy — the marriage of gallantry and wit ran no smooth course with the Lady and the Peer. Indeed, the Lady had good reason for resentment. When she wrote a set of melting verses on the death of a young bride, the Duke parodied them with a bit of insulting scurrility which shows only too plainly the savage grossness underlying the polish even of the Olympians. That was bad enough, but the outrage became intolerable when the Duke amused himself

at her expense with one of the common practical jokes of the day. Lady Mary tells the story in a letter to her sister:

> Sophia [the Duke] and I have an immortal quarrel; which though I resolve never to forgive, I can hardly forbear laughing at. An acquaintance of mine is married, whom I wish very well to: Sophia has been pleased, on this occasion, to write the most infamous ballad that ever was written; . . . and Sophia has distributed this ballad in such a manner as to make it pass for mine, on purpose to pique the poor innocent soul of the new-married man, whom I should be the last of creatures to abuse.

It needed a strong man to play the game of wit in that fashion, and it is not hard to understand why life at Twickenham, and indeed in England, should have become impossible for Wharton, even apart from his political vagaries. A few months after the placable letter just cited Lady Mary is again writing of her gallant rival:

> Sophia is going to Aix la Chapelle, and from thence to Paris. . . . We are broke to an irremediable degree. Various are the persecutions I have endured from him this winter, in all which I remain neuter, and shall certainly go to heaven from the passive meekness of my temper.

So the Duke of Wharton passes out of the literary life of England. The meekness of Lady Mary — others had a different name for it — endured the strain for fourteen more years, and then she too, partly by the venom of Pope's satire, was

driven from the land; both Peer and Lady lost in the battle where the little captain of Twickenham was wielding his "terrible swift sword." But neither was the victory long. The year after Lady Mary's exit the wife of another Edward Montagu, Mrs. Elizabeth, is gossiping thus to a friend: "Lady Shadwell saw Lady Mary Wortley at Venice, where she now resides, and asked her what made her leave England; she told them the reason was, people were grown so stupid she could not endure their company, all England was infected with dulness." The writer adds charitably that by "dulness" the exile meant her husband, whom she had abandoned. That gentleman was dull enough and mean enough, in all conscience, to afford his wife excuse for such a synonym; but when one thinks of the change from Lady Mary to Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, and of the difference between the society that fought and bled at Twickenham and the insipid circle that purred about the "Queen of the Blue-Stockings," one is inclined to believe the Lady meant precisely what she said. The twilight of the wits was come:

> Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,
> And universal Darkness buries All.

GRAY'S LETTERS

GRAY'S LETTERS

AFTER years of labour Mr. Tovey has finally brought to a conclusion his edition of Gray's Letters.[1] In its way, he has accomplished an almost perfect piece of editing; the chronology has been adjusted, the allusions have been hunted down with great patience, the text, where the manuscripts exist, has been reproduced with extreme fidelity. We ought to be, and are, grateful for the fruit of such conscientious toil, and yet, despite ourselves, we cannot escape certain doubts as to the utility of the plan, at least as regards the form of the text. Gray had a peculiar manner of writing. He not only employed the abbreviations common to his day, such as *w^ch* for *which*, but he had a trick of putting capitals anywhere except at the opening of the sentences. It may be highly valuable to know these usages, but, unfortunately, their effect in cold type is quite different from their effect in script, and to reproduce them exactly on the printed page is to make one of the most literate of men appear almost illiterate. We do not blame Mr. Tovey. He had to face this real di-

[1] *The Letters of Thomas Gray, Including the Correspondence of Gray and Mason.* Edited by Duncan C. Tovey. 3 vols., Bohn's Library. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1909 (2d ed.), 1904, 1912.

lemma of scholarship, that honesty to the letter sometimes means betrayal of the spirit; and which of us, with the awe of the young Ph.D. upon us, or with the fear of such scorn as Mr. Tovey himself has poured over poor, blundering Mr. Gosse, would have dared to tamper with the documents? Yet it is true, nevertheless, that a good deal of our modern editing, however profitable for the professional student, is of a kind to alienate the old-fashioned reader, and is helping to bring mere literature into disrepute. Such a result is peculiarly regrettable in the case of one who "could not bear to be considered himself merely as a man of letters," but desired "to be looked upon as a private independent gentleman who read for his amusement."

After all, Mason, the much-scribbling, vain, place-seeking, simple "Scroddles," as his friend called him, hit somehow on the right idea of biography, as did another foolish sycophant of the age; and I am not sure that there is any better way of getting at the man than by going back to Mason's selection and high-handed manipulation of the Letters, with the intervening bits of narration, sadly written as these are, and with the fragments of verse intercalated which belong not so much to Gray's poetical works as to his poetical life. And Mason in a phrase has given us what is still the best characterization in brief of Gray — "from his earliest years, curious, pensive, and

philosophical." To which might be added, as a kind of scholium, Gray's own list of his traits at the age of twenty-five: a "reasonable quantity of dulness, a great deal of silence, and something that rather resembles, than is, thinking; a confused notion of many strange and fine things that have swum before my eyes for some time, a want of love for general society; . . . a sensibility for what others feel, and indulgence for their faults and weaknesses, a love of truth, and detestation of everything else; . . . a little impertinence, a little laughter, a great deal of pride, and some spirits." Such he was to his friends and himself; such he appears in Mason's Life and in Mr. Tovey's edition of the Letters — curious, pensive, and philosophical.

His curiosity was as various as it was insatiable. It made him one of the most knowing antiquaries of the day, carrying him about England, despite his inert temper, for the investigation of old houses and churches; it led him to keep elaborate records of the weather and of the habits of plants and birds; it opened his mind to the new currents of romanticism as seen in the admiration of wild mountain scenery and in the furor for Celtic poetry, whether sham or genuine. Above all, curiosity made him a lover of books. "He was, perhaps, the most learned man of the age," said Potter, the translator of Æschylus; and the Reverend W. J. Temple, writing in the *London Maga-*

zine soon after Gray's death, had used almost the same words, adding: "He knew every branch of history. . . . Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his study; voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite amusements; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening" — all of which is no exaggeration, as may be seen from his manuscripts. As for sheer endurance in delight, the Encyclopédie was to him an amusement, while his well-known idea of Paradise was "to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crébillon." And this, after weighing the fruit and the pleasures of such an existence, is the conclusion of his reverend panegyrist.

Perhaps it may be said, What signifies so much knowledge when it produced so little? Is it worth taking so much pains to leave no memorial, but a few poems? But let it be considered, that Mr. Gray was to others at least innocently employed; to himself, certainly beneficially. His time passed agreeably; he was every day making some new acquisition in science; his mind was enlarged, his heart softened, his virtue strengthened; the world and mankind were shown to him without a mask; and he was taught to consider everything as trifling, and unworthy the attention of a wise man, except the pursuit of knowledge, and the practice of virtue, in that state wherein God has placed us.

A finer encomium of the curious and philosophical life has rarely been pronounced, yet how strange it sounds to modern ears? It was written

not a century and a half ago, and probably to most of those who read it here on this page it will seem to have come from another world, whose virtues are outworn and whose purpose even repels us as selfish indulgence.

Whether or not such an encomium of the quiet life can be applied without reservation to Gray or to the period in which he lived is another question. There were, no doubt, a few men of that age who found these rewards; and nothing is more delightful in a humble way than the echoes of the Horatian *fallentis semita vitæ* that we hear now and then from those who knew content in the cloistered walks by the Isis or the Cam. Such, for instance, are the poems of the Reverend Francis Drake, of Maudlin College, preserved in the *Literary Hours* of his friend Dr. Nathan Drake:

> Hid from the world, unknowing and unknown,
> I seek no other praises than my own,
> Heedless to catch the breath of public fame,
> And only cautious of avoiding blame.
> Here, mid the silent shade, and midnight gloom,
> With books I trace the sculptured spoils of Rome,
> Range thro' the sacred stores of ancient times,
> And revel o'er the scenes of classic climes.

And there were others, the unremembered monks of literature, if not the ambitious scholars, who were satisfied "in active indolence" to "pass the peaceful hours with books and rhyme." But Gray, it must be admitted, was not altogether

such an one. The surprising thing in his Letters, when one stops to think of it, is his attitude towards the University in which he elected to pass almost the whole of his mature life. Though curious in matters of architecture, and ready to undergo considerable discomfort in the pursuit of antiquarian knowledge elsewhere, he had, so far as the record shows, no interest in the buildings of Cambridge. He was peculiarly susceptible to the charms of nature in her wilder and her more cultivated aspects, and writes often of these things with romantic conviction. Not Wordsworth himself has expressed the beauty of the country about Skiddaw more lovingly than Gray has done in his Journal:

> In the evening, walked alone down to the lake by the side of Crow-Park after sunset and saw the solemn colouring of night draw on, the last gleam of sunshine fading away on the hill-tops, the deep serene of the waters, and the long shadows of the mountains thrown across them, till they nearly touched the hithermost shore. At distance heard the murmur of many waterfalls not audible in the day-time [*cf.* Wordsworth, *White Doe*, iv, 28]. Wished for the Moon, but she was *dark to me and silent, hid in her vacant interlunar cave.*

He can write feelingly of the grace of gardens, as of those at Hampton — "Every little gleam of sunshine, every accident of light, opens some new beauty in the view" — but for the entrancing loveliness of the Cambridge Backs there is in all his letters, I believe, not a single word.

Oftenest in fact, when he refers to the University it is in the captious tone of Walpole gossiping about society, though without Walpole's superb prolixity of cynicism. We hear much of the spiteful intriguing of the Common room, of the rowdyism of students, and the discomforts of the place, but of the University as the proud deposit of the scholar's faith, never a hint. It seems to have been to him such a trial of the nerves as the sister University was to a contemporary who published a parody of the *Elegy* in *The Oxford Sausage*, with a picture at the head which is evidently meant to represent Gray in a posture of peevish lassitude:

Now shine the spires beneath the paly moon,
  And through the cloister peace and silence reign,
Save where some fiddler scrapes a drowsy tune,
  Or copious bowls inspire a jovial strain:

Save that in yonder cobweb-mantled room,
  Where lies a student in profound repose,
Oppress'd with ale, wide-echoes thro' the gloom
  The droning music of his vocal nose.

Within those walls, where thro' the glimm'ring
      shade
  Appear the pamphlets in a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow bed till morning laid,
  The peaceful Fellows of the College sleep.

Not in Gray's *Letters* will you meet with any eulogy of the high fellowship of the mind in col-

legiate ease; such an ideal seems never to have touched his imagination. If he clung to the University, it was probably because of its relative quiet and its libraries, and because, if Cambridge was a "silly, dirty place," London, where he passed much time to be near the newly opened Museum, was only a "tiresome dull place, where all people under thirty [said Walpole, "Gray never was a boy"] find so much amusement."

Nor, in his own pursuit does Gray appear to have discovered the noblest satisfaction of learning. He read enormously and annotated indefatigably; he drew many delights from the paradise of print, and what speaking things his books were to him may be known from that "great hubbub of tongues" in his study of which he sends so amusing an account to his friend West. Yet in the end those of us who would look for life in our libraries must wonder to see how frequently the terrible word *ennui* drops from his pen. In one of his earliest letters he writes of "low spirits" as his "true and faithful companions," and indeed they, or a kind of "white melancholy," as he calls it, never left him for long. "To be employed is to be happy," is one of his maxims, which in various forms he repeats over and over again, and it is only too clear that a good deal of his reading was in the nature of a dull narcotic for the emptiness of time. "I rejoice," he writes to Walpole, "you can fill all your *vides;* the Maintenon could not,

and that was her great misfortune" — and his own, he meant to imply. Mr. Tovey quotes from Voltaire the famous passage in Madame de Maintenon's letter which Gray had in mind, and which had impressed Dr. Johnson also: "J'ai été jeune et jolie: j'ai gouté des plaisirs: j'ai été aimée partout. Dans un âge plus avancé, j'ai passé des années dans le commerce de l'esprit; je suis venue à la faveur, et je vous proteste, ma chère fille, que tous les états laissent *un vide affreux*." Alas, the word of the poet and scholar of Cambridge was in the end not much different from that of the lady of Versailles: "I cannot brag of my spirits, my situation, my employments, or my fertility; the days and the nights pass, and I am never the nearer to anything but that one to which we are all tending."

We must remember the commonplace of this lurking *ennui* of Gray's life when we read the question of the eulogist, "What signifies so much knowledge?" with the brave answer: "His time passed agreeably; . . . and he was taught to consider everything as trifling . . . except the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of virtue." The eulogist tells only half of the truth.

There were no doubt particular reasons, apart from the common state of humanity, which helped to fix the white melancholy on Gray. At an earlier day his eager curiosity would have brought a different kind of happiness to him. In the sixteenth

or seventeenth century he might have been a Scaliger or a Casaubon, for whom the pathway of truth lay in the mere accumulation of knowledge, and the orthodoxy of faith was dependent on the philological restoration of a text. Or, if not precisely acquiring happiness, he might have felt that in the sheer continuity of reading he was fulfilling the highest destiny of man. We might have found in his diary, when he had passed a whole day from early dawn till late night over his books, Casaubon's exultant phrase, *hodie vixi*, or on another day the record of wasted time which Mark Pattison quotes with such feeling: "This morning not to my books till seven o'clock or after; alas me! and after that the whole morning lost; nay, the whole day. O God of my salvation, aid my studies, without which life is to me not life." That work of accumulation and restoration had been done, and men had learnt that the elusive light they sought was not to be found in mere erudition. There is, in fact, not a hint in Gray's letters that his reading meant the keen pursuit of truth; there is no assurance of any other purpose whatever. He never used his acquisitions in formal teaching; he had no serious project of scholarly production; he merely read, and took notes.

He might well have said with Montesquieu that study was for him the sovereign remedy against the ills of life, but I doubt if he could have added truthfully, *n'ayant jamais eu de chagrin*

qu'une heure de lecture n'ait dissipé; for such as Gray, the sovereign remedy is a narcotic indeed, but a drug which leaves him, awaking, to the ancient tedium, never dissipated and never changed. If he was not always successful in the fight against *ennui*, what lover of books to-day shall cast the stone at him? The ability to find continuous comfort in the printed page, without the stimulation of some real or fancied duty, is, indeed, one of the rarest gifts in the world.

The best account we have of Gray as scholar and reader is that written by Norton Nicholls, who as a young student at Cambridge was taken up by the older man, as was the Swiss Bonstetten, with something like a pathetic desire to enjoy vicariously the hopes and eagerness of youth. Nicholls's acquaintance with Gray, he tells us, began one afternoon in the rooms of a Fellow of Peterhouse, and we can almost feel the keenness with which the solitary poet grasps at a friendship that promises a sympathy of the imagination. "The conversation turned on the use of bold metaphors in poetry, and that of Mllton was quoted, 'The sun to me is dark, and silent as the moon,' etc. When I ventured to ask if it might not possibly be imitated from Dante, 'Mi ripingeva là dove il sol tace,' Mr. Gray turned quickly round to me, and said, 'Sir, do you read Dante?' and entered into conversation with me." It may have been the sudden regard of Gray at this time that

led Nicholls to remember and speak of being awe-struck by his "lightning glance." But that was not the only occasion on which Nicholls caught the "fine frenzy" of the poet in Gray.

> One morning [he writes], when I went to him as usual after breakfast, I knocked at his door, which he threw open, and exclaimed with a loud voice,
>
> "Hence, avaunt! 'T is holy ground."
>
> I was so astonished, that I almost feared he was out of his senses; but this was the beginning of the Ode which he had just composed.

The point is that this stirring imagination of Gray's, though it was sufficiently strong to prevent him from finding content in merely feeding the appetite of an insatiable curiosity, was yet not powerful enough or steady enough to give him a real purpose or to lift him to the serener heights of unworldliness. He was, I suppose, what might be called a religious man. At least there is no word in his Letters to indicate that he ever questioned the orthodox belief of the day. Voltaire was "the great object of his detestation," for whose power of mischief he had a kind of impatient terror, and the King of Prussia's poetry he scorned as "the scum of Voltaire and Lord Bolingbroke, the *crambe recocta* of our worst freethinkers." Even Middleton's skeptical tendency alarmed him, although he admired that writer's literary style. Yet there is no sign that he found any deep source of consolation in his faith or that

the drama of the Anglican service meant anything to his imagination. There is a good deal in his correspondence about ecclesiastical antiquarianism, but so far as I remember of King's College chapel, which lay almost at his door and is one of the most precious things of the world, he never speaks, save once in passing, when he questions the authenticity of an anecdote about Christopher Wren and the chapel roof. Did the magic of those stones have no meaning for him?

A certain idle traveller, one afternoon, sat far back in the nave of that chapel in such a position that, looking obliquely along the southern windows into the choir, he could see their projecting mullions but not the glass, while the late sun filtering dimly through the coloured panes transformed the whole wall into the semblance of a great gleaming opal. And with the spectral light the voices of the unseen priests reciting the vesper service and the chant of the choristers seemed to mingle and pour upon the listener a pure and mysterious awe. Did such a scene have no appeal to Gray? or did he merely keep these things silent in his heart? He could in the concealment of Latin verse touch on the deeper and more elusive feelings, as in the exquisite quatrain he sent to West in a letter:

O lachrymarum fons, tenero sacros
Ducentium ortus ex animo; quater
Felix! in imo qui scatentem
Pectore te, pia Nympha, sensit.

But was the mystery of religious awe already restricted for him — as to so many it seems restricted to-day — to the romantic solitudes of nature? —

> Præsentiorem et conspicimus Deum
> Per invias rupes, fera per juga,
> Clivosque præruptos, sonantes
> Inter aquas, nemorumque noctem.

Possibly, if West had lived and the correspondence with him, while maintaining its freedom, had matured in judgement, we might have a somewhat different notion of Gray's nature, as indeed his nature itself might have expanded more opulently. Certainly to us who must know him through his Letters, the early death of his closest friend is an irreparable loss. They had been comrades together at Eton, and on separating, one for Oxford and the other for Cambridge, began the correspondence which continued for eight years, closing only with the death of West, from consumption and a "load of family misfortunes." It is easy to smile at the solemnity that sometimes shows itself in these letters: boys of their age and disposition are likely to be a bit portentous when they write about themselves. But on the whole I do not know where one would find a more beautiful or more promising friendship. Nor are the letters without their actual charm. Though the expression may be occasionally pedantic, the ardour for literature and the search for a philosophy

of life cannot fail to stir the reader with memories of his own eager youth. Much of the verse that passed between the enthusiasts is in Latin, and if the muse of West was somewhat halting, at least it is not every young man who composes hexameters on his cough — "ante omnes morbos importunissima tussis" — while tossing in bed at four in the morning. Just a month later Gray sends him a letter which indicates a most extraordinary range of reading, including a challenge to West to name the source of a couplet about a dimple, and containing these words, only too sincere: "I converse, as usual, with none but the dead; they are my old friends, and almost make me long to be with them." West's reply follows:

> Your fragment is in Aulus Gellius; and both it and your Greek delicious. But why are you thus melancholy? I am so sorry for it, that you see I cannot forbear writing again the very first opportunity; though I have little to say, except to expostulate with you about it. I find you converse much with the dead, and I do not blame you for that; I converse with them too, though not indeed with the Greek. But I must condemn you for your longing to be with them. What, are there no joys among the living? I could almost cry out with Catullus, "Alphene immemor, atque unanimis false sodalibus!" But to turn an accusation thus upon another, is ungenerous; so I will take my leave of you for the present with a "Vale, et vive paulisper cum vivis."

Only twenty days after that pathetic call to his friend to live for a little with the living, the

writer himself was dead. Something no doubt is required of us to-day to feel the charm of these letters; not many of us can recall immediately the lines in Catullus that follow West's quotation, and give poignancy to it:

> If thou neglect me now, and in my misery leave,
> Ah, what were men to do? What faith will not
> deceive?

And not only West, but Gray also, turned to Latin for the expression of his more personal emotions. I have already quoted the stanza, *O lachrymarum fons*, which Byron was to use twice as a motto for his poems, and the *Præsentiorem*, and there are other verses in the letters almost as intimate. Finest of all, and too little known, are the lines to Favonius with which he closes the fragmentary work on Locke's philosophy, *De Principiis Cogitandi* — finer and far more intimate in their pathos than the English sonnet, "On the Death of Mr. Richard West," which to Wordsworth seemed so frigid. The reader who has lost his Latin and Greek is debarred from the closest intimacy with Gray's heart.

There was nothing in the character or learning of Walpole or Mason or Wharton to supply the place of Gray's dear Favonius. To none of these could he write, as he might have written to West, with that ranging love of literature which takes the great traditional emotions of the past as an

extension of one's own inner life. And when Nicholls and Bonstetten came into his circle he was too much older than they to open his breast with the perfect freedom of equality. Nicholls has left a brief but almost Boswellian sketch of his friend, and the wandering Swiss, who when Byron met him at Coppet could only remember Gray as "the most 'melancholy and gentleman-like' of all possible poets," still interests us for Gray's exclamation to him in a London street: "Look, look, Bonstetten, the great bear! There goes *Ursa Major!*" So much we owe to them. But with the passing of West the scholarship of Gray became more and more a mere conversation with the dead, and Life, which brings us here for her own ends, and is resentful of any attempt to escape her imperium, took her revenge on him by planting in his heart that white melancholy which was to be always his nearest companion. It is the old saying of Horace in reversed words, yet not so different in meaning, *debemur vitæ!* He had too much of the romantic imagination for the dull satisfactions of pedantry, too little of the religious imagination to create for himself a life of peace in the ideal world, or to understand the full meaning of that old saying: *sit anima mea cum philosophis*. As we think of the power of his intellect, and then of the little he wrote and of the restraint of his Letters, we remember Mr. A. C. Benson's fine metaphor of the caged eagle, and

the soliloquy he puts in the mouth of the dying poet:

My sober manhood gained, nor apt for jest
Or loud uproarious revel, such a maze
Of intertwined and tortuous passages,
By which mankind wind backward to the dim
And wailing Chaos, to the feet of God,
Yawned vague before me, that I hastened on,
And so, through many a dim and dreaming day,
Wandered alone in labyrinthine glooms,
And trackless wastes, with sight of giant souls,
Whose robes I seemed to touch, and see their brows
Contracted grim, and hear their muttered speech.
. . . . . .
All these I saw, and lingered, glad at heart,
In stately harbourage of gardens cool,
By splashing fountains, leafy colonnades,
White temples, bosomed deep in swelling woods,
Where slender statues seemed to tread on air.
. . . . . .
All these I would have sung, but dim constraint
Pressed close my stammering lips and trembling tongue;
It needs some ready singer, some young heart
To throw a sacred sunshine of its own
On these dark haunts, and read the riddle right
Of monstrous laws, that work their purpose out
For trembling man, unheeding how they crush
A thousand hopes, so one sure step be gained,
One soul set higher on the stairs of God.
Not I, who scarce, through sad laborious days,
Can write, and blot, and write the languid verse,
Erase the erring strophe, gild the rhyme,
Set and reset the curious epithet,
And prune the rich parenthesis away.

But it would be doing a grave injustice to one of the finest collections of letters in the language to end on this negative note. If they omit much that we might desire, they are replete with exquisite traits of sentiment and wisdom. If Gray read voraciously, he also read critically, and no one was better able in a sentence or a single vivid phrase to express the very pith and marrow of an author. It was Gray who said of Shenstone that "he goes hopping along his own gravel-walks, and never deviates from the beaten paths for fear of being lost." Could the timid poet of Leasowes be presented more picturesquely and correctly in an image? Still more remarkable is the famous portrait of Sterne: "Have you read his Sermons (with his own comic figure at the head of them)? They are in the style I think most proper for the pulpit, and show a very strong imagination and a sensible [sensitive] heart; but you see him often tottering on the verge of laughter, and ready to throw his periwig in the face of his audience." How Sterne himself, the master of significant gesture, would have relished that inimitable picture! And in the criticism of *genres*, what is neater than this revision of Milton's famous dictum: "Extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry"? If he proceeds to deny to his own verse these qualities at which he always aimed, that is owing to modesty rather than to ignorance. In a

larger field one might cite his remarks on Aristotle, or, better yet, the philosophical disquisition on Bolingbroke inserted by Mason after a letter to Stonehewer, dated August 18, 1758, which deals summarily with Shaftesbury.

There is wit aplenty in these pages, but there is feeling, too, though commonly much subdued. More beautiful letters of condolence have scarcely been penned than those in which Gray sent his sympathy to friends on the occasion of bereavement. One of his sentences to Nicholls—"In one's whole life one never can have any more than a single mother"—has become a kind of proverb of the heart. Even more remarkable as a whole is the letter to Wharton, which has come down to us with the endorsement of the recipient, "On Robin's Death." I must quote the greater part of it:

I am equally sensible of your affliction, and of your kindness, that made you think of me at such a moment. Would to God I could lessen the one, or requite the other with that consolation, which I have often received from you, when I most wanted it! But your grief is too just, and the cause of it too fresh, to admit of any such endeavour. What indeed is all human consolation, can it efface every little amiable word or action of any object we loved, from our memory? Can it convince us that all the hopes we had entertained, the plans of future satisfaction we had formed, were ill-grounded and vain, only because we have lost them? The only comfort (I am afraid) that belongs to our condition is to reflect (when time has given us leisure for reflection) that others

have suffered worse, or that we ourselves might have suffered the same misfortunes at times and in circumstances, that would probably have aggravated our sorrow. You might have seen this poor child arrive at an age to fulfil all your hopes, to attach you more strongly to him by long habit, by esteem, as well as natural affection, and that towards the decline of your life, when we most stand in need of support, and when he might chance to have been your *only* support; and then by some unforeseen and deplorable accident, or some painful lingering distemper you might have lost him. Such has been the fate of many an unhappy father! I know, there is a sort of tenderness, which infancy and innocence alone produce, but I think, you must own the other to be a stronger and more overwhelming sorrow. . . .

On one side of his character, in his mordant, cynical attitude towards the persons of the University with whom he lived and in his faculty of sharp critical phraseology, Gray belongs with the wits and continues the tradition of Pope and Swift. On another side, shown more completely perhaps in his verse but indicated also in the descriptive passages of his letters — as in the occasional touches of sentiment and in the enthusiastic acceptance of Ossian — he stands with the new creators of romance. And this composite nature of his mind, while it may be one of the contributing causes of a certain inefficiency in his genius, preventing him from ever quite speaking out, and separating him from the Augustan circle of which Johnson was the deity, explains in part also the fascination of the man and of his Letters. In a

peculiar way we seem to see here the very type of the age which in other men, who did not in a way surpass it, presents only one of its two contradictory phrases. Thus, too, the very omissions we have noted in his self-portraiture, the very failure to carry any of his intellectual and emotional tendencies to their complete expression, may be regarded, not as a weakness, but as a mark of the restraint and clarity which were the positive characteristics of the eighteenth century. Certainly to us, who live in a time of incontinent extremes, the very balance of his mind may be a source of quiet delight, in which we come to love the man almost as much for his limitations as for his curiosity and pensive philosophy.

DECADENT WIT

DECADENT WIT

MR. HOLBROOK JACKSON[1] has done a good service, though perhaps not quite in the manner he intended, by giving us a history of the spasmodic irruption of decadent wit into English art and literature in the closing years of the nineteenth century. His quotations are so apt and abundant, his characterizations so clear and well-instructed, that one would scarcely need to go outside of his pages to form an independent judgement of the men; while the confusion of his own ideas when he tries to moralize the facts, is an added document in evidence of the condition which he expounds as apologist. Nor was the movement, however abruptly its peculiar manifestation may seem to have begun and ended, without deep roots in the past and strong influence on the present.

The naughty decade, to give it a name in its own taste, may be said to have opened with the publication of Oscar Wilde's *Decay of Lying* and *Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1890, and to have closed with his pitiful death in 1900. By the little band who were working so feverishly in the midst of the surrounding British philistinism it was thought to be the dawn of a new era for art — "a great

[1] *The Eighteen Nineties.* By Holbrook Jackson. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. 1913.

creative period is at hand," wrote William Sharp. While at the same time it was felt to be the end of all things, and the phrase *fin de siècle* was whispered as a kind of magic formula. "It's *fang-de-seeaycle* that does it," says one of John Davidson's burlesque characters, "and education, and reading French." As one goes back to the productions of these men now, and particularly as one turns over the effusions in the early volumes of the *Yellow Book*, one is likely to be impressed mainly by a note of amateurishness running through their work. In comparison with the decadents of the Continent whom they attempted to imitate, they appear rather like truant boys who need to be spanked and sent again to their lessons. In the first issue of the *Yellow Book*, the "incomparable" Max Beerbohm prints *A Defence of Cosmetics*, wherein he observes sententiously that "the Victorian era comes to its end and the day of sancta simplicitas is quite ended." The essay seems to us to-day, with the reek of Broadway in our nostrils, as childlike a piece of extravagance as could well be imagined; yet it succeeded in rousing a little storm of protest, and one solemn critic wrote it down as "the rankest and most nauseous thing in all literature." Another contributor, Lionel Johnson, asks, in surprise at his own naughtiness: "What would the moral philosophers, those puzzled sages, think of me? An harmless hedonist? An amateur in morals, who means well, though mean-

ing very little?" And one is inclined to answer: "My dear sir, be comforted; the puzzled sages would not have thought of you at all."

Yet however we may, and do, pass by these books as largely factitious imitations, there is an aspect of the revolt that is serious enough in all conscience. The disease from which it sprung was no jest, and beneath the antic contortions of their wit these men were suffering the very real pangs of physical disorganization. It is in fact like a nightmare to read their lives. The hectic decay of Aubrey Beardsley is almost health in comparison with the state of most of those who gave to the movement its tone. Of the living we speak not: but there is Lionel Johnson, the best artist of them all when he grew serious, a victim of absinthe, found in the gutter with his skull crushed; there is John Davidson, with his vision of a new universe ended in mad suicide; there are Ernest Dowson and Francis Thompson, mingling their religion with the fumes of alcohol and opium; there are others whose tainted lives and early deaths need not be examined; and, above all, is the hideous tragedy in Reading Jail. These men, who appeared to be treading so fantastically in "the variant by-paths of the uncertain heart," knew also in the flesh the certain terrors of organic decay.

No, we shall do these men less than justice if we merely smile at their mopping and mowing as at the gestures borrowed of a jackanapes. They

are worthy of condemnation. They had a real driving motive in the flesh, and they had their ideal philosophy. Through all their works, now in the form of direct argument, now implied in the symbol of verse or picture, you will find running the ambitious design of making life itself into a fine art, of welding life and art into one indistinguishable creation. As Oscar Wilde says of his hero in the book which is the completest manifesto of the school, "There were many, especially among the very young men, who saw, or fancied that they saw, in Dorian Gray the true realization of a type of which they had often dreamed in Eton or Oxford days — a type that was to combine something of the real culture of the scholar with all the grace and distinction and perfect manner of a citizen of the world. To them he seemed to be of the company whom Dante describes as having sought to 'make themselves perfect by the worship of beauty.'" And with this coalescence of art and life, as its very source and purpose, was to be joined the garnering of sensations, in a manner which these young enthusiasts caught up from Rossetti and Walter Pater and the other virtuosos of the vibrating nerve. Thus, to the confusion of the Philistine, the Puritan, and the votary of common-sense, they were to create for the world a new Hedonism: "It was to have its service of the intellect, certainly; yet it was never to accept any theory or

system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience. Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be."

In this longing after the fulness of experience, without consideration of the lessons of experience, we come close to the heart of the movement, and we also see how it was no vagary of a few isolated youths, but was the product of the most characteristic evolution of the age. "It was," as our present guide rightly observes, "the mortal ripening of that flower which blossomed upon the ruins of the French Revolution, heralding not only the rights of man, which was an abstraction savouring more of the classical ideal, but the rights of personality, of unique, varied, and varying men." Personality was to assert itself in the direction of unlimited and unquestioned expansiveness, in the claim of the individual to be purely and intensely himself, in the free pursuit of those emotions and sensations which are the root of division among mankind, while denying those rights of man, in the classical sense, which mean the subordination of the individualizing desires to the commonalty of the law of reason. And, as life and art were to proceed hand in hand, personality was to manifest itself in a symbolism which should endeavour, in the words of Arthur Symons, "to fix the last fine shade, the quintessence of things; to fix it fleetingly; to be a disembodied

voice, and yet the voice of a human soul." The final marriage of life and art was to be in the swooning ecstasy of music. There was nothing discordant between the toil of the artist to fix the quintessence of things in fleeting form and the insatiable curiosity of a chaotic egotism. Nietzsche had said it: "Unless you have chaos within, you cannot give birth to a dancing star" — an idea which Mr. Jackson has developed at hazardous length, thus:

> Indeed, when wrought into the metal of a soul impelled to adventure at whatever personal hazard, for sheer love of expanding the boundaries of human experience and knowledge and power, they [this egotism and curiosity] become, as it were, the senses by which such a soul tests the flavour and determines the quality of its progress. In that light they are not decadent, they are at one with all great endeavour since the dawn of human consciousness. What, after all, is human consciousness when compared with Nature but a perversity — the self turning from Nature to contemplate itself? . . . Not even a child has curiosity until it has experienced something; all inquisitiveness is in the nature of life asking for more, and all so-called decadence is civilization rejecting, through certain specialized persons, the accumulated experiences and sensations of the race.

There is no need to illustrate this philosophy by examples. Any one who has read Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* may waive the pleasure or pain of going through the other productions of the school. Most of these writers, in fact, had a

perfectly clear knowledge of what they desired to be and to accomplish. And not seldom they knew the fruits of their philosophy and experience, as any one may discover by turning over the pages of Mr. Jackson's book. The root of the whole matter lay in a febrile satiety of the flesh, in a certain physical lesion, which the sufferers, having no philosophy of moral resistance to oppose to it, translated into a moral fatigue. "It was as though they had grown tired of being good, in the old accepted way; they wanted to experience the piquancy of being good after a debauch." In this mood the literature of exquisite curiosity, whether veiled under the English cant of Epicurean austerity or announced more boldly from across the Channel, fell upon the dryness of their souls like a spark of fire upon parched grass. The consequence is set forth in Dorian Gray's discovery of *A Rebours:*

> It was the strangest book that he had ever read. It seemed to him that in exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him. . . . There were in it metaphors as monstrous as orchids, and as subtle in colour. The life of the senses was described in the terms of mystical philosophy. One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediæval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book. The heavy odor of incense seemed to cling about its pages and to trouble the brain. The mere cadence of the sentences, the subtle monotony

of their music, so full as it was of complex refrains and movements elaborately repeated, produced in the mind of the lad, as he passed from chapter to chapter, a form of reverie, a malady of dreaming.

There could not be a better description of the way in which art revealed itself to all the men of the group as a kind of narcotic for the torture of tired nerves, evoking under brush or pen the images of artificial dreaming, whether these displayed "the wan and saintly amorousness" of Burne-Jones's figures for *The Romaunt of the Rose*, or waxed "fat with luxury" in the illustrations of Aubrey Beardsley, or flaunted the ghastly cosmetic rictus of Arthur Symons's creatures of the stage. Almost always behind the veil, and too often stalking wantonly into view, is the horror of an impotent sex-inquisitiveness and perversion. The subject is not agreeable to touch on, but any one who thinks such a statement too strong may satisfy himself by the frank confessions of their apologist. Beardsley, for instance, "loved the abnormal, and he invented a sort of phallic symbolism to express his interest in passionate perversities. His prose work, *Under the Hill*, is an uncompleted study in the art of aberration." The spectacular disaster of Reading Jail has so impressed our imagination that we are apt to regard its victim as a monster among his fellows, whereas in his heart of hearts he was probably less perverted than were many of those who went

through life unscathed by public opinion. But if the author of *Dorian Gray* carried the outer brand, the wages of an evil mind fell upon them all. It is said of Aubrey Beardsley that he "introduced into art the desolation of experience, the *ennui* of sin." That is to take him, perhaps, a trifle too gravely, but there is something in the conduct of his later years that may at least remind us of Poe's decrepit *Man of the Crowd*. "His restlessness," observes his friend, Max Beerbohm, "was, I suppose, one of the symptoms of his malady. He was always most content where there was the greatest noise and bustle, the largest number of people, and the most brilliant light." And that, adds Mr. Jackson, "is a picture of the age, as well as of its epitome, Aubrey Beardsley." The right of personality to reject "the accumulated experience" of the race, and to expand indefinitely in the search of sensations, turns out in reality to be in no wise "at one with all great endeavour," but to be in the main the unfruitful restlessness of satiety and impotence.

I would not have it inferred that the votaries of the Yellow Nineties produced nothing of pure beauty and intrinsic value. One of them, indeed, Ernest Dowson, who died just as the decade came to an end, left a modest body of verse, which possesses a singular fascination, and which, though Mr. Jackson quotes, I believe, not a line of it, may still be prized when many of its more as-

sertive contemporaries are all but forgotten. The little collection opens with a variation on the old Horatian theme, *Vitæ summa brevis:*

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate:
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

They are not long, the days of wine and roses:
Out of a misty dream
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

That is all: two light stanzas, with no mark of originality, unless it be in the sighing melody of the words. Yet you will not read them without saying to yourself: This is poetry, the ancient wonderful heritage, though held in feeble hands. And in the whole collection, amid a good deal that flutters ineffectually, you will find some ten or twelve other poems that carry the same note of indefinable charm. Such a product is not to be reckoned with the great and grave things of literature. If you wish to feel this distinction, read the last of the lisping lines at the head of which Dowson has written the majestic Latin phrases: *O mors! quam amara est memoria tua homini pacem habenti in substantiis suis;* and then, having read these, turn to No. 120 of the *Adventurer*, in which Dr. Johnson has unrolled his solemn meditations on the same text:

Affliction is inseparable from our present state; it adheres to all the inhabitants of this world, in different pro-

portions indeed, but with an allotment which seems very little regulated by our own conduct. It has been the boast of some swelling moralists, that every man's fortune was in his own power, that prudence supplied the place of all other divinities, and that happiness is the unfailing consequence of virtue. But, surely, the quiver of Omnipotence is stored with arrows, against which the shield of human virtue, however adamantine it has been boasted, is held up in vain: we do not always suffer by our crimes; we are not always protected by our innocence. . . .

Nothing confers so much ability to resist the temptations that perpetually surround us, as an habitual consideration of the shortness of life, and the uncertainty of those pleasures that solicit our pursuit; and this consideration can be inculcated only by affliction. "O death! how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that lives at ease in his possessions!"

Dowson's is the poetry of weakness, but of weakness that veils itself in subtle reticences and in the praise of silence — his favourite word — and, above all, that wears the loveliness of purity. Strange as it may sound, in connection with his life and his associations, there is something of almost virginal innocence in his muse. To read his *Pierrot of the Minute* after hearing others of the decadent band, is as if a silence had suddenly fallen upon a place of unclean revelry, and out of the silence there rose the thin sweet voice of a child singing of pathetic things it scarcely understood. I may be peculiar in my taste, but in my ears he bears comparison well even with the re-

ligious poet whose reputation has been growing so portentously these latter days. His *Amor Umbratilis*, simple and unsuggestive as it is, arrests me with a touch that I somehow miss in the more complicated stanzas of Francis Thompson on the same theme of love's renunciation; and in all the gorgeous, stirring pomp of Thompson's odes there is still lacking — to me at least, though his best admirers will judge otherwise — some mark of the divine submissiveness which I find, or almost find, in such a poem as Dowson's *Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration:*

Calm, sad, secure; behind high convent walls,
  These watch the sacred lamp, these watch and pray:
And it is one with them when evening falls,
  And one with them the cold return of day.

. . . . . .

They saw the glory of the world displayed;
  They saw the bitter of it, and the sweet;
They knew the roses of the world should fade,
  And be trod under by the hurrying feet.

Therefore they rather put away desire,
  And crossed their hands and came to sanctuary;
And veiled their heads and put on coarse attire:
  Because their comeliness was vanity.

And there they rest; they have serene insight
  Of the illuminating dawn to be:
Mary's sweet Star dispels for them the night,
  The proper darkness of humanity.

Calm, sad, serene; with faces worn and mild:
Surely their choice of vigil is the best?
Yea! for our roses fade, the world is wild;
But there, beside the altar, there, is rest.

The strange thing, as I have said, yet not so strange perhaps, when we reflect on it, is that this sweetness and purity should be found in one who was so thoroughly corrupt in body and habit. There was the weariness of the devastation in his soul, as expressed in the refrain of the poem by which he is best known:

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

But it was not the hardening desolation of the inner lie, and decadence kept him, as it were, in a state of fragile immaturity. His face, as we see it in the photograph or in the sketch by Mr. Rothenstein, with its unclean lips and furtive eyes, has the look with which we are too familiar in the degenerate types of our city streets, and from which we turn away with physical revulsion; but it half conceals also something of the expression of Keats, a Keats ruined. He was, as Mr. Symons says of him so finely, "a soul 'unspotted from the world,' in a body which one sees visibly soiling under one's eyes; . . . there never was a

simpler or more attaching charm, because there never was a sweeter or more honest nature."[1] He suffered the penalties of physical decay without corrosion of the soul.

I would not say that Dowson was altogether peculiar in this respect, but it is true, nevertheless, that the malady of the flesh, with rare exceptions, carried its contagion into the very stronghold of the mind, creating thus what may be called the decadent or, in its wider application, the romantic Illusion. The nature and extent of this illusion may be inferred from the quotations and illustrations already given; but we need not rest in inference alone. It is, in fact, hard for a man to admit that he is simply futile or vile, and so, when the decadent is not flaunting his ill deeds wantonly in the face of the world in the vanity of excess, you are likely to find him posing as a martyr of the higher life. With the composure of a saint he will tell you that physical disease is a cause of the soul's health, that nastiness of the mind itself is the price of mental expansion, that, in a word, any morbid symptom is the indication

[1] Mr. Symons has written nothing better than the brief biographical sketch attached to the volume of Dowson's *Poems*. It has something of the quality (only finer) of Miss Louise Imogen Guiney's *Study* prefixed to the *Selected Poems of James Clarence Mangan*. Much may be forgiven Dowson for the "most exquisite and appropriate impossibility" of his love for the refugee's daughter, as the story is told by Mr. Symons.

of spirituality. He believes, as Swift said of certain men of an earlier day, that "the corruption of the senses is the generation of the spirit." This ancient, ineradicable error is implicit in the aphorism of John Davidson: "Decadence in any art is always the manure and root of a higher manifestation of that art." It is more clearly stated in Mr. Jackson's apology: "All the cynicisms and petulances and flippancies of the decadence, the febrile self-assertion, the voluptuousness, the perversity, were, consciously or unconsciously, efforts towards the rehabilitation of spiritual power." And it is expanded with Celtic fluency by Mr. Yeats:

I see, indeed, in the arts of every country those faint lights and faint colours and faint outlines and faint energies which many call "the decadence," and which I, because I believe that the arts lie dreaming of things to come, prefer to call the autumn of the body. An Irish poet, whose rhythms are like the cry of a sea-bird in autumn twilight, has told its meaning in the line, "the very sunlight's weary, and it's time to quit the plough." Its importance is great because it comes to us at the moment when we are beginning to be interested in many things which positive science, the interpreter of exterior law, has always denied: communion of mind with mind in thought and without words, foreknowledge in dreams and in visions, and the coming among us of the dead, and of much else. We are, it may be, at a crowning crisis of the world, at the moment when man is about to ascend, with the wealth he has been so long gathering upon his shoulders, the stairway he has been descending from the first days.

That is very pretty and sweet, and no doubt our wings are growing, but it is not easy to associate these flattering prognostics with such a movement as that which was represented in the Nineties by the particular band of rebels and revellers of whom Mr. Yeats was the leading mind, as he is the most distinguished surviver. The little *Book of the Rhymers' Club*, published in 1892, lies before me now, and as I turn its pages I discover nothing very wicked or startling, but of notable promise equally nothing. Should we, indeed, expect new life from young men to whom "the sunlight's weary"? Mr. Yeats himself, in his more candid moments, is not always so hopeful. I have heard him complain whimsically that the "Rhymers" had the morals of brigands and the manners of bishops, whereas the youngsters who are carrying the torch to-day have the morals of bishops and the manners of brigands—a sad derogation from the faith.

It may be unkind to say it, but one cannot study the lives of these men without feeling that the conversion of so many of them, including Aubrey Beardsley, to Catholicism was only another manifestation of the same illusion of the decadent as that which speaks in his theories of art. There is an unpleasant savour of truth, though not at all as Mr. Jackson meant it, in his saying of Francis Thompson, that "he took to poverty as he took to opium, as a sedative for the

malady of spirit." Religion was not altogether for Thompson an opiate for *malady of spirit*, but with some of his contemporaries the two were as closely connected as their art was dependent on opium and alcohol. Too often conversion was merely the fruit of perversion.

This is rather the personal aspect of the decadent paradox, but it wore a social aspect which is more dangerous, as it is more deceptive. "It will seem, then," observes Mr. Jackson, "that the two paths of the modern art movement resolved themselves into two very definite and very different aims: the communal and the individual, the public and the private." There is nothing unusual in this, but we enter into the region of paradox when we find that many of the votaries of the modern art saw no incompatibility at all in these different aims. "All really great works of art are public works — monumental, collective, generic — expressing the ideas of a race, a community, a united people; not the ideas of a class," says Mr. Walter Crane, speaking for himself and William Morris and other temperamental socialists. Now, again, in a sense, that is true: art does spring naturally from a convention and a certain higher community of feeling; but it is at least questionable, in the face of the records, to define this convention as contrary to the ideas of class, for hitherto "great art," as contrasted with popular art, whether in Greece or Italy or France or China

or Japan, has been aristocratic in its purpose and support. And, certainly, to suppose, as so many of the artists of the *fin de siècle* did suppose, that there was any bond of sound communism in their search for the last refinements of personality and in their theory of untrammelled expansiveness — certainly, there is in this something almost grotesquely absurd. Here, too, Oscar Wilde is a type and exponent of his fellows. He was not jesting, but rather stating their sober practice, when he boasted of "the beautiful sterile emotions" of art as hateful in the eyes of society: nor was it altogether a piece of idle persiflage when he took as his hero of the artistic temperament that master of "pen, pencil, and poison," Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, who, being reproached for the murder of Helen Abercrombie, merely shrugged his shoulders and said, "Yes, it was a dreadful thing to do, but she had very thick ankles." Were not the story too repulsive for print, I could parallel that seemingly childish effrontery with what I heard told only yesterday here in New York in perfect seriousness. But what shall we think of the sincerity of the author of *Salome* when he begins to indulge in humanitarian dreams, and what shall we say of this citizen of a Utopia for dandies when he undertakes to write solemnly of *The Soul of Man Under Socialism?* As a matter of fact, he was as sincere in this as in any other of his attitudes, and his inability to see anything

incongruous in a humanitarian communism of totally undisciplined individualists was only one phase of the extraordinary illusion which held most of his comrades. As physical degeneration and morbid restlessness seemed to these men, looking at themselves, the marks of superiority in things spiritual, so, looking at the State, they dreamed of creating a gentle concert of souls out of lawless individualism. Wit for wit, there is better art and there is a sounder view of life in the avowed cynicism and social hatred of Swift and his friends than in this modern dream of social sympathy without the discipline of character.

The particular movement of Mr. Jackson's eulogy has come to its end, and most of the boastful voices of rebellion have fallen into one or the other silence; they were never a great force in English society. But the twin illusion which formed the real creed of the decadents has by no means disappeared with them, as it by no means began with them. It had its source in one of the great guiding movements of the nineteenth century, was caught up in self-justification and noisily bruited about by a band of men who were really and physically diseased, and now it is becoming the common property of innumerable good citizens of England and America who would shudder at its practical application.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that the

fountain-head of the stream is in the Germany of the later decades of the eighteenth century. One of its earliest manifestations was Heinse's tale of *Ardinghello*, in which "the evangel of art went hand in hand with naked, unveiled sensuality," and which announced with sufficient frankness that "the decency of our common prosaic life is not permitted in art." Add to this such maxims of Wackenroder's as that "art is a seductive, forbidden fruit, and he who has once tasted its inmost sweetest sap is forever lost for the practical living world," and that "the fairest stream of life springs from the coming together of the streams of art and religion"; illustrate them with the identification in Novalis of beauty and sickliness, and crown them with Schleiermacher's glorification in the pulpit of the man who, "in the caprice of liberty, makes his personal view of the universe the centre of all religion" — combine these variously with a thousand other similar sentiments, develop them into a vast literature of prose and verse, and you will know whence the Continental artists of the nineteenth century learnt their creed of uncontrolled personal expansion, with the illusions that follow in its wake. Nor has the source dried up. Quite recently one of our distinguished German professors lent his name to the propagandist publication in English of the morbid obscenities of Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*, and another well-known teacher of German has made

himself the public defender of a group of unwholesome moderns who still believe that "decency is not permitted to art."

But the more immediate literary source of this perversion in the Nineties was rather French than German. To-day it is to be found in the group of powerful Russian writers, with their congeners in Scandinavia and the other northern countries, whose works for some time past have been flooding the world in French and English translations. How deeply this literature is tainted could be shown by innumerable examples; one must suffice. If there is any book thoroughly typical of the Russian and Scandinavian ideal it is *Crime and Punishment*, and if there is a single passage in which the moral of that book is typified it is the scene selected by its latest editor in English, Mr. Laurence Irving, as the epitome of "the animating spirit of Dostoieffsky":

> His eyes gleamed, his lips trembled, and, resting his two hands on her shoulders, he cast an angry look on this face bathed in tears. In a moment, he bent downwards, kissing the girl's feet. She started back frightened, as she would have done from a madman. For Rashkolnikoff's face at this moment was that of one.
>
> "What are you doing? And to me?" stammered Sonia, growing pale with sorrow-smitten heart.
>
> Upon this he rose. "I did not bow down to you, personally, but to suffering humanity in your person."

Not long since, at a dinner with a philosopher and two professors of French and English litera-

ture, respectively, I observed casually that my summer had been darkened by dwelling in the nightmare of *Crime and Punishment* and other books of its class. At this my friends, better read in this literature than I, no doubt, admitted the nightmare, but clamorously rebuked me for not feeling uplifted by its spiritual implications. There it is. Somehow we are to be lifted up by sympathizing with a madman worshipping humanity in the person of a girl of the street. Filth, disease, morbid dreams, bestiality, insanity, sodden crime, these are the natural pathway to the emancipation of the spirit; these in some mysterious way are spirituality. And the same lesson runs through Tolstoy and Strindberg and a dozen other moralists who are, as it were, the Prophets of our young. In subdued form, befitting what remains of the reticence of the English temperament, it lurks among the present-day inheritors in London of the Yellow Nineties. It will be found hidden in some of the writings of Mr. Galsworthy, who is perhaps at this moment the most notable of the group — scarcely concealed at all in his latest novel, *The Dark Flower*, with its sickly analysis of illicit emotion, its satirical desiccation of the intellectual life, its presentation of virtue as a kind of impotence, its constant insinuation that the only escape of the spirit from stolid defeat is through "the passionate obsessions that cannot decently be satisfied." One is reminded again of

the old scornful saying of Swift: "The corruption of the senses is the generation of the spirit."

What else is the meaning of the outburst of filth on the stage under the pretext of "social uplift"? Would any sane man, in the name of virtue, defend the representation before young men and maidens of the inner nastiness of the stews (made nastier by the dramatist's imagination), or the exhibition of the revolting details of physical corruption, if his understanding had not been obscured by the insidious theory that associates art and spirituality with licence and disease? Alas, it is still true that the human heart is deceitful above all things. Some time ago a friend of mine was present at the Boston opera when a certain morbid piece was sung. He was amused, and, being somewhat old-fashioned, was a little shocked, at seeing the dowagers of the town, in their conspicuous circle, clapping their hands at the exhibition of a theme of perverted sexuality. The next day he was less amused, and more shocked, to read the names of the same dowagers among those who had met together to hear the horrors of "white slavery" discussed and to concert means for its repression.

Even more pervasive is the illusion that through the very licence of personality men are to be brought into the bond of social communism, and the kinship of this illusion with the other and their source are clearly implied in the typical

scene from Dostoieffsky already quoted. Or, if a stronger illustration of this theme in Russian is desired, it may be found in a tale of Leonid Andreyeff's which was the occasion of comment some ten or twelve years ago. In decency — shall I say, unfortunately? — I can do no more than hint at the narration. We are to suppose, then, that a proper young man is walking through a lonely country with his betrothed. They are attacked by a party of tramps, and the girl is killed. After the departure of the tramps the young man, by yielding to his bestial instincts, comes to realize that he is essentially of the same stuff as the outcasts of society, and that in the lowest depths of the heart is the common meeting-place of humanity. It used to be held that the peculiar bond and unity of mankind was to be sought in the higher plane of reason, with its law of self-restraint, whereas by the passions we were united with the unreasoning beasts; it has remained for certain doctors of modern literature to teach us otherwise.

There may seem to be a great gulf between such a writer as Andreyeff and the socialistic wits now entertaining London. There is, indeed, a gulf — and yet! Strip off the rags of decorum which Bernard Shaw, despite his protests, still wears as an Englishman; look at the real meaning of the thing, and you will find that the moral of *Fanny's First Play*, for example, which our kindly good folk enjoy so innocently, is not very different

from that of the more barbarously logical Russians. What else does Bernard Shaw's laughter mean, when he represents a girl of modest upbringing as awakened to the hypocrisy of convention and the solidarity of mankind by getting arrested at night in the streets of London for disorderly conduct? It is the comedian's way of saying that spirituality is the product of vice, and that the uniting bond of society is the revolt against restraint. Mr. Shaw is a delightful humourist. Some one should suggest to him, as a subject amazingly suited to his genius, the state of life in a communistic society made up of such effronteries of egotism as himself. Perhaps I am myself eccentric in this, but, after all, I can read with less insult to my reason the rather childishly flaunted paradoxes of the naughty decade, and am inclined to think their perversion less insidiously dangerous, than the smug prurience of Mr. Galsworthy and the other bourgeois wits who are to-day taken with a certain seriousness as critics of our social conventions.

I write "to-day," and to-morrow the thunder of these men may be rolling as dimly about the horizon as is now the revolutionary noise of the "Rhymers," and these happenings I record may seem as ancient as the wickedness of Nineveh. But other men, and this is the whole charge against decadent wit, will be forgetting that art, so long as it is human, must concern itself with

the portrayal of character — triumphant or defeated, still character — just as surely as religion is concerned with the creation of character. The truth of it is summed up in the sentence of Whichcote, one of the great divines who were preaching when Milton was writing his poems: "For we all say, that which doth not proceed from the judgement of the mind, and the choice of the will, is not an *human act*, though the act of a man."

THE END

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